

Head of Christiana Presbyterian Church
Rev. Bob Undercuffler

November 2, 2014
Newark, Delaware

Psalm 34:1-10, 22
Revelation 7:9-17

“Saints Sing”

As we gather for worship this morning, the first day of the week,
I have no idea of what you came through the past six days:

The glad birth of a baby within the family, perhaps.
Or tormented by the illness of a dear friend. Possibly
your own illness, that lay dormant for a while, but
now you note recurring signs ... and you shudder.
Or perhaps you grieve ... or you're continuing to
grieve the loss of a precious friend.

But this hour when the church gathers, this awesome, unique
hour, With Christ, the Lamb at our center – we recognize that help
is on the way. Yes, help has arrived.

We are protected within safe shelter.
The good shepherd has guided us to springs of the
water of life,
And God is wiping away all tears from our eyes,

Yes, we may be hungry and thirsty,
And we may shiver in the approaching cold,
Or we may burn with passion over the coming
elections –
or the unfairness of the financial system,
and many other timely social issues that seem
out of whack.

But Sunday worship feeds all the Saints with a hope that springs
eternal. Eternal as the headwaters of the Christiana creek.

This is the awesome story that the book of Revelation tells for All
Saint's Sunday.

An enormous crowd of followers of the Lamb...of Christ.
Palm branches in our hands, our robes washed clean for the
celebration.

With the Lamb – standing before the throne.
 There are so many people that no one can count them all.
 This throng of people has come from
 everywhere, from every race and tribe, from
 every nation and language.
 They are **EVERYBODY**,
 and they sing ... for singing is what Saints do.

No matter what is going on around us, believers always sing:
 Day or night, in desert or oasis, whether in prison or free,
 Saints sing.
 During calm and storm they sing

“Salvation belongs to our God and to the Lamb.” The angels and
 elders and deacons and the whole crowd are singing,
 “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving
 and honor and power be to our God, forever and ever!
 Amen”

It is not simply what the saints know that matters,
 But it is also what they hear; what they have
 experienced – and pass along.
 Saints sing.

Sometimes we're tricked into refusing to sing.
 My brother's fifth-grade teacher told him he couldn't sing.
 And he hasn't sung since.
 Not even Take Me out to the Ball Game or the Star
 Spangled Banner.

Some say, “I don't know the words ... I don't know the tune,” How
 can you expect me to sing?” “I don't read music,”

Some report, “My voice left me years ago; I can't sing anymore.

But John's Revelation here in the book of many revelations,
 overcomes such trickery, for John introduces us to the music of
 the heavenly choir.

Reminding the Saints – both living and dead – that the good
 news is heard, even overheard... and expressed. **AND
 SUNG.**

And the Saints' cry need not always come in four-part harmony,
but it can always be a joyful noise...a glad song...a soulful melody
... a sorrowful lament.

So the Saints observe ... and listen – and join in the song.

Even in the midst of tragedy; evil, war, famine, and greed,
saints keep on singing.

Through sickness, even unto death, persecution, hurricane,
tsunami, and injustice may confront us, yet the Saints keep
singing.

Why this fervency? Why this resolve to sing?

Because we know good news. We have heard good news.
We have experienced good news.

Good news bursts through our hearts, our lives, our mouths, our
songs. We sing for the courage to live in the present while we
stride into the future.

In John's vision, God rules from the throne. Christ, the Lamb
accompanies us.

There is no silence in that vision, for no one can keep from
singing before the throne.

From creation to redemption, and beyond, the crowd
gathers around the throne in numbers too large to
count.

Saints from every nation listen and sing,
and God keeps hope alive in the world.

Hope alive in our church.

Worship on the first day of the week is the resurrection song of
victory over death.

We may arrive at worship weary and worried,
caught-up in all we have been through,
feeling beaten down, even near death.

Frustrated and afraid ...

But then when we hear the music, when the choir
prays for us and with us ...

and we join in song,
and make tuneful response ...

and together, in proclamation of the good news we become again the new creation that we are in Jesus Christ.

When the benediction has been pronounced, we leave with songs in our hearts and tunes on our tongues.

We are not afraid to engage the world, because shelter is already ours.

The Lamb by the throne is already our shepherd.

The waters of life are flowing.

Trouble may not have been erased from our lives, but tears no longer overwhelm, for God is present and wipes them away.

Songs of memory and songs of great hope are sung around the throne and in the church.

Saints dressed in robes washed clean for the celebration are upheld by the song of Saints and elders and choir.

And Saints dressed in street clothes hear the music of the great cloud of witnesses that surround us and all join together.

Great ordeals will not stop us. Trials and tribulations are but for a season..

The music of those gathered at the throne signals a victory that goes by the name, "Salvation."

The music of salvation transforms the saints and the places we live.

The music of salvation provides a different melody to political deciding and acting, for the music of salvation affirms that Jesus is Lord, not the emperor.

The music of salvation invites the revolution that will reconcile, and restore and heal.

The saints are listening and singing, "Salvation belongs to our God and to the Lamb!

It is the first day of the week, after all.

The new creation opens wide for all the Saints.

Let the Saints keep on singing.

And living.

And marching.

