

REJOICE, YOUR NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN HEAVEN

Hear again the Word of the Lord,

*Three things in their marching well march; four in marching well, walk.
(The) lion, mighty among beasts, and does not turn back from the face of
all;
(The) strutting cock;
and the he-goat;
and (the) king with a band of soldiers.¹*

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

This is the week to “rejoice” in the midst of repentance. In the contemporary interpretation of the historic Introit chant, we heard the call to rejoice with God’s Holy City, the New Jerusalem, who, as we heard in the reading from the Revelation, is continually coming down from heaven. We are free to have joy in the reality that the Lord, through His Word, has been faithfully, for centuries, building up the New Jerusalem of living stones. As we have continued through these Wednesday Vespers services of our Lord, we are all being built up into a greater knowledge of the Truth—of our part in that Holy City, in which God rules in our midst.

All of that was foreshadowed in the words from the Proverbs for this evening. It begins with the words of Agur, his observation of how things are in this world. Tonight’s section follows a pattern he has used in this chapter, in earlier sections which were not treated in our weekly reflections on Proverbs 30. He alternates between three and four in his lists. Tonight, there is a further pattern within the pattern. The two outside lines are comparable, as are the two inside. That means that the lion with his majesty among beasts and the king with his army are complementary. It also means that the strutting rooster and the he-goat are likened.

The inner two who march well in their walking are the smaller animals. In their own little minds, they are rulers of their parts of the barnyards. They respectively

¹ Proverbs 30:29-31.

lord it over the hens and she-goats, and any lesser animals (or greater ones, until someone grabs them by the neck or horns and shows them who is boss)!

The outer two, the ones with which Agur gives the greater descriptions, do not need to strut in order to command respect. Their stride is stately, showing the confidence born of those who command respect, rather than the lesser leaders of the animal kingdom who demand respect. It is these two, the lion who turns back from the face of no other animal, and the king with his army that form the thread that links to the readings from Revelation and the Gospel of Luke.

Not only is the lion a symbol of the Ruler Who came out of the tribe of Judah.² The king is a symbol of the King of the Universe seated on his throne. Both the Lion and the King are summed up in one Man, Jesus. Hear again of the stateliness of the Eternal King:

And the One sitting upon the throne said, "Behold, now I make all things." Then He says, "Write, because these words remain faithful and true."

And He says to me, "It is become! I (I AM) the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end."³

That is the testimony of the Lord of Hosts, the stately King of kings ruling upon His throne. He has declared that the heavenly visions of the new Jerusalem has become. They began when He defeated the Satan, and bound him to the earth. They continue whenever Satan is reminded that he has been cast eternally from heaven.

There is reason for joy in our Lenten reflections. The one who from almost the beginning of creation became the accuser of man in his sins, cannot stand before the Lord on His throne. Like the strutting rooster or stubborn he-goat, the Satan has a small kingdom to rule for a time. But, God has grabbed him by the neck as one would a rooster to cast him to his place, on the earth. On the Last Day, God will send his angels to grab the accuser by his horns and toss him into the lake of fire, where the Satan will

² Revelation 5:5.

³ Revelation 21:5-6a.

suffer eternally. That reality, decided in the mind of God, revealed to us by Holy Scripture, brings us to that which God has promised:

*I, to the thirsting one, will give from the spring of the water of life freely. The one victoring will inherit these things and I will be to him God, and he will be to me, son.*⁴

In Christ, You have victored over the Satan. He cannot bring a charge before God against those who are baptized and continually believing the true Lion of Judah, the eternal King Jesus. The heavenly inheritance is yours, bought and paid for in the blood of Jesus. This was given to you in time when you died with Jesus and rose to new life in Him. God has given you to drink now, in time, from the living waters which flow from His pierced side. These waters are none other than His living Word and Sacraments. This too, is reason for joy in the season of Lent. From those realities, then, you know that they are true now, for you have the Word of Jesus for you, not just for His original disciples, when He says:

*Behold, I gave to all of you the authority to continue walking upon snakes and scorpions and upon all the powers of the enemy, and nothing shall definitely not commit injustice (against you).*⁵

This power the Church still has. It has been said that every time a baptism in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is celebrated, Satan is again cast out of heaven. This is why the churches who still rejoice in the Sacraments are said to be continuing to exercise such divine power. And that is cause for rejoicing, but it is not the most important reason. Jesus Himself gives that to us when He says:

*Nevertheless, in this do not all of you rejoice – that the spirits to all of you continue to submit – but you all rejoice that the names of all of you have been written in the heavens.*⁶

Amen.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

⁴ Revelation 21:6a-7.

⁵ Revelation 10:19.

⁶ Revelation 10:20.

Lent IV Wednesday

Proverbs 30:29-31; Revelation 21:1-7; Luke 10:19-20

April 2, 2014

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Soli Deo Gloria