

“To Him Be Glory and Dominion!”

Text: Rev 1:5b-6

1) To Whom Should Glory And Dominion Be Given?

Suggested Hymns:

2) How Should We Give God This Glory?

159, 802 LSB, 793, 294, 446

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Revelation 1:5b-6, *To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The last book of the Bible, the Revelation of St. John the Divine, is known to us as a book of visions and prophecies, of symbolical figures and pictures. These are hard to understand and difficult to interpret. Even Luther did not want to force his views of the book on any one. And it is not possible to explain conclusively all the details of the grand revelation which God *“sent and signified ... by His angel to His servant John”¹* during his exile on the isle of Patmos.

Therefore, there have been a great number of interpretations of this book. There have been numerous conclusions drawn from it. There is nothing of importance occurring in the world at any time which some one does not try to connect with a passage of St. John’s Revelation.

Whether it be the fall of the Kaiser or the rise of Bolshevism, the spread of Fascism or the growing number of dictatorships, for some people - all this is found and foretold in the Book of Revelation.

But the Book of Revelation contains not only visions and prophecies of future events; the attentive reader will find also many plain Gospel-messages in it.

Listen to the following well-known passages taken from the book of Revelation. Revelation 3:20, ²⁰ *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If*

anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Revelation 2:10, *Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

Revelation 3:11, *¹¹ Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.*

Revelation 14:13, *'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'* "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

Revelation 21:4, *⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*

This is plain language, isn't it? These are comforting passages, are they not? All taken from what is considered a dark and difficult book of the Bible, from the Book of Revelation.

And so also the text for today is taken from the Revelation of St. John, *To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.*

We are overcome by the majestic grandeur and simple beauty of these words. It may seem like painting the lily, to add anything to them. But let us on this second last Sunday of the Church-Year endeavour to fathom to some degree the meaning of these wonderful words and to apply them to ourselves in the light of the whole revelation of God. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. To Whom Should Glory And Dominion Be Given?

We ask, To whom are glory and dominion here ascribed? To God who loved us, says St. John, and we know to whom he refers. It is He of whom John says in his first Epistle: *"God is Love."*² Luther says: *"If any one would paint a picture of God, he must paint nothing but love; for God's essence is nothing but a fiery oven of such love as fills heaven and earth."*

Now, it is impossible to picture an abstract thing like love, and it is difficult to make plain the meaning of the inspired writer when he says: *“God is Love,”* and when he assures us that God loves us.

That God should love His creatures seems natural. We take pride in the things we have made and have a natural affection for them. That God should continue to love us even after we have become a wayward race, this, too, seems plausible.

For a human father still loves his strayed child. But that God should love the human race even when it deliberately does things to offend Him, when it refuses His advances toward reconciliation, when it continues to sin knowingly against His Law written in man’s heart and conscience, — this is love incomprehensible.

Here is the eternal, holy God, the almighty Creator. Here is man, a confirmed sinner, the avowed enemy of God. And still St. John assures us that God loves us. *“To Him be glory and dominion!”*

There is one way of depicting such an abstract conception as love, however, and that is through its manifestations. And the greatest manifestation of God’s love is brought out in our text: He *washed us from our sins in His own blood.* Our sins are thought of here as stains, which they are: stains of character, stains of conscience, and stains of our soul. We need cleansing. Never did a dirty street child in the filthiest slums need washing more than we need washing from the filthiness of sin.

But all the soap and washing powder in the world, all the cleaning establishments in our country, all the laundries everywhere, cannot wash us and make us clean from the stains of our soul and conscience. This can be done only by God who loved us, loved us with a divine, unending, and incomprehensible love.

We know through whom this spiritual washing was done: through God’s Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a well-known truth with most of us. But it is an outworn theory with many others.

We are told that Peter and John and Paul had grown up and lived in an atmosphere of blood sacrifices and therefore used the terms and similes of the Temple service in order to talk intelligently to their generation. Today, it is said,

we are moving further and further away from the idea that Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

But the word of God is always correct and it says in Hebrews 9:22 that *“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”* Jesus is *“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*³ Only when God “sees the blood” on the door of our hearts, will His avenging angel pass over us.

A certain minister in England was called to a house in a disreputable neighbourhood. He found a dying woman who, after having been a wife and mother, had led an immoral life. He began to preach to her the *social gospel* — that she had been the victim of circumstances and that God was not so strict and would overlook her mistakes.

The woman looked at the minister pathetically, as though she would say: *That will not help me who has been such a great sinner.* The preacher thought about what he said and then told the woman the old Gospel which he had learned in childhood. The woman died in the faith that she was washed from her sins by the blood of Christ and thus went to heaven.

And note the contrast in our text: “[He] *washed us from our sins in His own blood.*” They are our sins even though we have inherited some of them. If any one inherits a great sum of money from his parents, he usually does not disclaim ownership of the money just because he inherited it. So our inherited sins are truly our sins.

As we learnt in Confirmation, there are two kinds of sin, original and actual. Original sin (inherited sin) is the total corruption of our whole human nature. Actual sin is every act against a commandment of God in thoughts, desires, words, or deeds.

These are our sins and they are washed away by Jesus’ own blood. His holy, precious blood is the blood of the God-man Jesus, God and man in one person. Scripture says, *“And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”*⁴

The hymnist wrote,⁵

All that I was, my sin, my guilt,
My death, was all my own;

All that I am I owe to Thee,
My gracious God, alone.

Do you not believe that “*To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood*” should “*be glory and dominion forever and ever*”?

But there is another reason in our text why “*glory and dominion*” belong to God: He “*has made us kings and priests to His God and Father*”

When the prodigal son returned to his father, he wanted his father to make him “*like one of his hired servants.*”⁶ But did he? No; the father received him as his son and made a great feast to celebrate his return.

When we return to God by making our robes white and washing them in the blood of the Lamb, we ask Him to give us but a small place in His kingdom. But what does He do? He makes us kings. We may say that the time of kings is past. Portugal and Spain, Russia and Germany, may have gotten rid of their kings and emperors; but as long as there are Christians, there will be kings.

Every Christian is a king; the most recent convert in the mission-field as well as the lifelong church-member is a king “*to His God and Father.*” And not a king in name only, as some kings in the world are today. We are not kings of England or of Italy, but kings “*to God,*” in His spiritual kingdom.

As St. John says in Revelation 5:10, ¹⁰ *And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.*” He has given us kingly power — power to mortify our sinful flesh; power to conquer Satan; power to overcome the world; yes, power to prevail with God in prayer; even power to judge the world.

And as though that was not enough, He has also made us “*priests to God and our Father.*” In the Old Testament God had established special orders of priests. These are done away with in the New Dispensation.

Of course, the false development of the Church called Romanism has reintroduced “*holy orders.*” But the apostolic teaching was that all Christians are “*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood.*”⁷

Luther reiterated the doctrine of the apostles also in this respect by emphasising the spiritual priesthood of all believers. Nor is this an empty title. We are also priests in fact; we have direct access to God, with no need of a

mediator save Jesus Christ; we can enter the Holy of Holies and bring our own offerings, the meat-offerings of our gifts, the incense-offerings of our prayers.

Yes, we are indeed kings and priests to God and the Father of Jesus Christ. Well may St. John break forth in this doxology: *To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.*

2. How Should We Give God This Glory?

We may of course entirely misapply what we have heard of God's great and wonderful works for us. We might yield to spiritual pride: *"Look at us. We are kings and priests. We are saints. Indeed, we are the people whom God has favoured with His love."* But such self-glory would be proof that we have not been benefited by what we have read and heard this morning. No, The Psalmist says in Psalm 115:1, *¹ Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth. "To [God] be glory and dominion!"* says our text.

But how should we give God this glory? By singing hymns of praise to Him? Yes indeed; for how can we hear the wonderful message of our text without joining the angels in singing: *"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!"*⁸

Whether we think of the work of our redemption in the light of the incarnation of the Son of God, as we do in the Advent and Christmas season; whether we contemplate His deep humiliation and subsequent exaltation during the Lenten and Easter season; whether we are alone with God or are with Him in the company of fellow-believers; whether we are experiencing the serene enjoyment of God's love and of the heavenly washing by the blood of Christ or are crying out for this atoning love during *"fightings and fears within, without,"*⁹ *"our mouth should be filled with laughter and our tongue with singing."*¹⁰

But hymns of glory and praise are not enough. The contemplation of God's love and sacrifice will also cause us to confess our own unworthiness and along with our dire need of this love as exhibited in the outpoured blood of Christ, the Son of God.

The hymnist wrote,¹¹

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.

The thought of Jesus born in lowliness, dying in disgrace, but living and reigning in the full exercise of His endless majesty, should make us fall down and worship Him, not only giving Him glory, but also confessing that to Him shall be dominion forever and ever.

And we should also thank and praise God for His love and for the redemption of our souls by offering ourselves to Him as true New Testament priests. Let us return thanks to Him because, as our text says, He ***“loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.”***

When Jesus had cleansed ten lepers of bodily leprosy, He exclaimed, *“Where are the nine?”* Having washed us from the leprosy of our soul, will He find the same ingratitude as He did among those nine Jewish lepers? No, in our lives we want to glorify God who has made us, who has redeemed us, and who has kept us unto this day in the true faith.

By acting at all times as kings and priests to our God and Father, we shall glorify Him who has made us a royal priesthood. *He who belongs to the nobility has certain obligations.* And indeed, we belong to a divine and heavenly nobility, not by heredity, but by being knighted through Jesus Christ to be God’s gentlemen and gentlewomen.

As such we have assumed a high obligation, the obligation to make all our thinking, living, and doing a glorification of God’s name and an exaltation of His dominion.

So let us conclude by repeating once more that majestic evangelical doxology of St. John: ***To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.***

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Revelation 1:1

² 1 John 4:16

³ John 1:29

⁴ 1 John 1:7

⁵ Hymn 333

⁶ Luke 15:19

⁷ 1 Peter 2:9

⁸ Isaiah 6:3

⁹ Hymn 335, Just as I am

¹⁰ Psa. 126:2

¹¹ Hymn 54