

The Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick
Easter 5c 2019 - Revelation 4.1-3; 5.11-14
May 5, 2019 (St. Paul, Hampton)

I LOVE Revelation! One of my favorite books the bible. Book of such hope!

Too often Revelation has been presented as *Left Behind* series. Scary book.

But Revelation is a letter of grace, love, hope.

Filled with God's never-ending love for God's people.

Promise of God to be with us always -

especially when things seem filled with despair, corruption,
oppression, fear, loss.

Written to people living under fear of persecution in the Roman Empire
under emperor Domitian,

People who likely remembered the chaos, fear, and destruction
of the earlier persecution under Emperor Nero.

People who every day faced risk of imprisonment, death, isolation,
prosecution, persecution, martyrdom.

Also, though, ...written to people who are at times complicit in this persecution
by supporting an empire which works in greed, oppression,
slavery, economic injustice, intimidation.

At the heart of Revelation is people crying out to God

in the midst of their angst and anxiety, their fear and despair.

And God responds to them that God is with them! ALWAYS!

God promises them that fear, death, persecution, greed, oppression, injustice

will NOT win the day, will never win the day.

God's judgment must prevail! **God** will bring an end to despair.

God's love does and will continue to win!

God has already brought hope in Jesus Christ, the lamb who was slain.

God has brought hope in the resurrected Christ!

The promise of Easter - which is echoed in Revelation -

is that hope *always* wins! ALWAYS!

So, we hear in our reading from Revelation,

the people respond with worship and praise

for God who saves them.

Did you know that we sing Revelation every Sunday in worship?

More of our words and songs in the liturgy come from Revelation

than from anywhere else in the bible.

Songs of praise, hope, and thanksgiving!

Songs like the angels sing in the reading for today:

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might
and honor and glory and blessing!”

“To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might
forever and ever!”

We hear echoes of this in the Hymn of Praise, *Now the Feast*:

Power and riches, wisdom and might, all honor and glory to Christ
forever.

Praise and glory forevermore!

Revelation is a book of hope and worship.

A book of God’s love for us all,

especially when things seem filled with despair.

God is with us!

God’s hope is echoed in the world all around us - in the beauty of creation,

in art and in music.

I often think of art and music when I think of Revelation.

When I think of art, I especially think of Pointillism.

There is a famous painting by French Painter Georges Seurat called:

A Sunday Afternoon on La Grande Jatte,

You can Google it some time.

Pointillism

Little dots, small brush strokes

Seen up close, the tiny dots - don't makes sense.

Seen together though - the image is magnificent.

Step back, look at the whole picture - stunning!

More powerful and beautiful than the tiny dots individually.

That is the hope of Revelation!

I also think of music when I think of Revelation.

Imagine listening to a favorite hymn, but only one note of it.

There is only one sound.

Or listening to a full choir sing,

but only the tenors are singing, in the harmony.

When only one sound:

You don't get the full range of the music, the full glory of the sound,
the full measure and depth of all the voices.

Revelation especially makes me think of complex orchestral music.

We can't just listen to the violin, or the oboe, or the tympani, or the French
horn

- even though each is beautiful.

But the glory of the music comes when all of them play together.

I can close my eyes and just listen, be drawn in,
be filled with awe and beauty!

That is Revelation!

Or I think of creation - like the beauty that surrounds us today.

The rivers we celebrated in our Thanksgiving for Baptism.

Rivers which flow into the Chesapeake Bay and on to the ocean.

Or how about flowers. If I only see the stamen,

I might not even have any idea what it is!

Like Revelation - can't just look at one little section, one little set of words.

Must see the whole, glorious painting, symphony, creation

that is God's hope in revealed!

And must see Revelation within the larger context of scripture,

which always, always points to God's love, God's hope,

God's mercy, God's reign, God's presence in Christ Jesus.

In Revelation:

The trumpets sound, the angels sing

The feast is ready to begin

The gates of heav'n are open wide

And Jesus welcomes you inside

So, let us sing with thankfulness Songs of pure delight

Let us sing with joy, for we who once were dead are now living!

I LOVE Revelation!! A letter of such hope!

Inviting us to sing and to worship.

So, let's worship, let's sing!