

SAY "AMEN" TEN THOUSAND TIMES – REVELATION 5:11-14

PASTOR COLIN RIEKE – APRIL 19, 2015

¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" ¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" ¹⁴ The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.



Grace and peace to you from the one who is, who was and who is to come,

A long time ago, in a state far, far away, I can remember preaching one of my first sermons as a seminary student. OK, so it wasn't all that long ago, and Wisconsin is not as far as some other states, but it was one of my first sermons that I preached. Let me explain to you the situation. During my second year at the Seminary, I had a part-time job working at a ministry center on the north side of Milwaukee – a very impoverished neighborhood. Every so often, the pastor at the ministry center asked me to preach one of my seminary sermons. The first sermon I preached there had a grand total of four people to listen to it, one of them being my wife.

But during the sermon, I must have said something rousing to one of the congregants, because he busted out with an "Amen...Say it preacher." You can probably guess that he didn't grow up Lutheran. That's not to say it was wrong to do or in poor taste, but rather, as stoic Lutherans, we tend not to show too much emotion in our worship services. So the first time he said it, I was a little startled, but I went with it. He was merely giving his approval for the message. Because really, that's what "Amen" means.

Every time we say "amen" in the worship service, we're saying "this is true." Think about all the times we say "Amen." We say it after our confession of sins, we say it after our prayers, we say it after the benediction at the close of the service. All of these things are true. We say "amen" in this service a total of ten times, not including the amount of times I will say it in the sermon.

Now just think about how many times "amen" would have been said in the scene we just read about from Revelation. In that scene, we get a snapshot of the throne of God and all the angels and all of creation surrounding it. In the presence of the almighty God there would be a lot to say "amen" to. Even though we can only see this vision of heaven through the eyes of John, we too can find a lot to say "amen" to. I dare say we could SAY "AMEN" TEN THOUSAND TIMES.

1. They would all be true
2. They would be too few

(1)

We continue our journey through Revelation this Easter season and are reminded that Easter means victory. When we expand our gaze of this particular vision of John, we see that John has entered the throne room of the God of the universe, and what a throne room it is. Before the throne was a glassy sea and an emerald looking rainbow. There were four living creatures standing before the throne, and twenty-four elders seated on thrones surrounding him. And now this view is expanded even further. His panorama view expanded to see a myriad of angels around the throne. The scene was truly breathtaking.

Just think about the different things that have taken your breath away. Maybe it's an awesome gift you weren't expecting. Maybe it's the sight of your bride walking down the aisle toward you. Maybe it's one of our many Arizona sunsets. These can be sights that take your breath away. Take all of those events and multiply them 10,000 times, and you still wouldn't have the "breathtaking-ness" of what John saw in this vision.

What an inspiring picture for John to give to the early Christian church. This was a church that bore the brunt of persecution. It was not a glorious thing to be part of the church, and it certainly didn't look like the church had won the victory. But this is precisely why God gave John this vision, to remind the church of the victory Jesus won at Easter. Mere words would not be enough to describe what John saw.

And what were the angels in this heavenly vision before the throne room shouting? **"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise."** It was John the Baptist who said of Jesus, "Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Well now he has taken away the sin of the world. And he takes on all fullness of the deity with all praise and glory. For with each and every one of those attributes – power, wealth, wisdom & glory – he gave up for a time when he resided on this earth. He didn't look powerful hanging up on a cross, he wasn't wealthy, and he set aside his omniscience and his glory.

"And the four living creatures said, 'Amen!'" All of this is true. Now you may be wondering, why am I telling you all of this? Don't we know this already? Of course Jesus is powerful and almighty and looking after us right now. It is because it is true, and we always need to be reminded of it. It's true that for many of us, we are not going through the same persecutions that Christians in the early church are going through, but there are still many times in our life that we are reminded we don't live in a perfect world. You can turn on the news and see the horrific acts of violence taking place across our country. You could look at your bank and credit card statement and wonder where all your money's gone. You could look to a friend or a family member and wonder how the relationship turned sour. Our first reaction is not to SAY "AMEN" TEN THOUSAND TIMES to our almighty God.

Many might even blame God for the chaos in their lives. But at very least, even for Christians, coming to church and praising God can even be a little bit difficult. And maybe you're not going through a particular problem in your life. How often have we been truly sincere in our worship? How easy is it to go through the motions – saying the Lord's Prayer, zoning out when the pastor forgives our sins or gives the Lord's blessing.

All this reminds us that we not only live in a sinful world, we are part of that sinful world. A sinful world who does not give our God the praise he deserves. Because every time we say 'amen' there are countless 'amens' that are not being said. It is precisely why we are thankful that every "amen" said by the angel chorus is true. The lamb truly is worthy – worthy enough to take away our sin, powerful enough to raise us from death to life, wise enough to provide us support we need, and strong enough to keep us in the one true faith. Because if any of this were left up to us, we would always be left wandering.

And so the "Amens" that we say are always and forever in thanksgiving to the God who has done it all. And if we SAY "AMEN" TEN THOUSAND TIMES, every one of them would be true.

(2)

The first song that we hear in this section of Revelation, is sung by the angels. The second is sung by all of creation – **"every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea."** This leads us to the second point. Even if we SAY "AMEN" TEN THOUSAND TIMES" it would be all too few. It was not enough for the angels to sing the praises of God, all of creation sang his praises too.

It doesn't matter how many times we give thanks and praise and say "amen" to our almighty God, all of that would be too few. Which is why God encourages us to gather together with other believers, which is why there are many examples of prayers and songs to the Lord God in the Bible. No matter what we do, we don't have to worry about praising our God too much. It doesn't matter how many times we've heard the stories, it doesn't matter how long we've been going to church, it doesn't matter how many times we have confessed our sins and heard his forgiveness, it will never be too much.

You can imagine the scene. The songs are being sung, the praises are being raised, and the four living creatures are repeating again and again "Amen" and "Amen." What a wonderful scene for John to receive. The divine purpose of God's creation has been achieved. There is God's elect who will worship him with the angels and all of creation. This is what is coming. God wanted John to know that, God wanted us to know that.

We saw two examples of glimpses of that power in our other lessons for this morning. In the book of Acts we heard the miraculous conversion of the apostle Paul, where he was forced to his knees in reverence to the Lord Jesus Christ. In the gospel, we heard the disciple's fruitless fishing endeavor only bearing fruit after the Lord is there. Both times people fell to their knees in worship of the Lord – one forced, one willingly.

May the praise to our Lord never be done out of fear, but in willing thankfulness for what he has done. Yes he is an all-powerful God who could crush us like bugs, but he is also an all-loving God who comforts us when we are troubled. And what an example little children can be for us. Just this last week, my daughter Grace was playing with her toys. We have one of those Little People Manger sets. And she had grouped all of her little people in a semi-circle around the manger scene. It just reminded me of the scene of angels surrounding the throne of God in Revelation. This is not the action of someone who is fearful of God, but someone who trusts God like she trusts her own dad. What an "Amen" testimony.

How long would it take to SAY "AMEN" TEN THOUSAND TIMES? When I write my sermons, I estimate that I will speak at approximately 100 words per minute. If every word I spoke was "amen," it

would take me over 1 ½ hours to SAY “AMEN” TEN THOUSAND TIMES. While that would make for a pretty boring sermon if that’s all I said, when it comes to our God, every “amen” would be true, and they would still be all too few. That is how great and wonderful our God is. We can’t help but praise and worship him. Amen



“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

Revelation 5:12