

**MIDWEEK JUDICA**

Text: Revelation 5:6-14; St. Luke 23:26-56

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

There is an old Gospel song in which it is sung: *“There is power, power, wonder-working power in the Blood of the Lamb! There is power, power, wonder-working power in the precious Blood of the Lamb!”* The odd thing though, is if you were to ask those who typically sing that song where you could find that powerful, wonder-working, precious Blood of the Lamb, they would look at you with that *“deer in the headlights”* look. Sadly, for them, the Blood of the Lamb is locked away up in heaven; His Body too. They believe that His Body and Blood will not return to this earth again until that glorious Day when He will return on the clouds of Heaven. So even though the *“Blood of the Lamb”* is filled with wonder-working power, they cannot tell you how to receive this precious gift.

But Saint John can, and He does tell us where one can find this treasure! In the Book of Revelation, John sees the entire universe gathered together in worship, and that worship centers around the One who stands in the midst the throne of God, and that One is the Lamb standing (and so, is alive) and yet clearly bearing wounds (and so, was slain). The hymns of praise that swirl around the Enthroned One and the Lamb, in ever widening circles, finally embrace all of creation, ascribing to the Lamb great glory and praise, precisely because of what His Blood has done: *“redeemed us to God... Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”*

The Blood of *“the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world”* is not locked up in Heaven, my friends! The Blood that is filled with wonder-working power, precisely because it is the precious Blood of God’s Lamb who atoned for the sins of the world and sets us free from the power of death—that Blood stands at the very center of the Church’s worship, and praise is an ever present reality! That is exactly what our first reading from Revelation was describing. It was giving us the Heavenly view of what happens whenever and wherever the Church gathers together to join in the Supper of the Lamb.

Yet, how limited our vision is! We see only as if through a glass darkly. We see only the smallest part of the reality in which we participate whenever we gather here at the Lamb’s table. We see only the people who are in the room with us. But there is so much more, if we would only believe!

Where the Lamb stands alive forevermore, offering to us the very Body sacrificed on Calvary’s Cross, and the very Blood that ransomed the world, there we join with angels and archangels and with all the company of Heaven—the Church Triumphant—and with all His people on earth—the Church Militant—in giving all glory, honor, and worship to the once crucified, but now risen, living, and reigning LORD, JESUS CHRIST, who is truly present among us as we take our place at His Table where Heaven comes down and touches the earth.

The author of the Book of Hebrews tells us, *“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn who are registered in Heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to JESUS the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the Blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.”*

Thus, you *have* come to Mount Zion! Every time you come to the LORD’s Table, you are there at Mount Zion. At God’s altar, you are in the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. So, of course, the angels are there—angels without number in their finest raiment! So, also, the saints are there—the spirits of the righteous made perfect—all the sainted believers, all your loved ones who have died to this world in the flesh, but still live in the spirit to God, all who await the Day of Resurrection, are there with you!

But greatest of all, God is there, the Judge of all. Yes, God is our Judge, but you have no need to fear! For also there is JESUS, our LORD, our SAVIOR, and our Advocate. God, FATHER SON, and HOLY SPIRIT are one. JESUS, IS the Mediator of the New Covenant, God’s Covenant with you—the Covenant of Forgiveness. And the Lamb’s Body is there, and His Blood, *“... the Blood of sprinkling that speaks of better things than that of Abel’s.”* *“Abel’s Blood for vengeance Pleaded to the skies; but the Blood of JESUS For our pardon cries.”* (Glory Be to JESUS, The Lutheran Hymnal 158)

As they laid JESUS on the wood of the Cross, as the hammer came crashing down, as His holy hands and feet were pierced by the nails, as His Blood flowed freely, staining the Cross and the cursed earth, as they raised Him up, what was He praying? *“Father, forgive them.”*

JESUS’ Blood has taken up that prayer and never ceases to cry out from the Cross and blood-soaked ground of Golgotha for our pardon. It is that same Blood that has redeemed us, paying the ransom the Law and God’s wrath against sin demands, that we may be reconciled to our God. It is that same Blood that secures the promise of forgiveness and eternal life for all of us penitent, dying thieves to whom JESUS has said, *“Today you will be with me in paradise.”*

The Body nailed to that Cross, is the same Body that Joseph of Arimathea so lovingly laid in the tomb, and it is the same Body that, in three short days shattered that grave and every grave, leaving death’s gates permanently cast aside as nothing more than twisted debris. It is that same death-destroying Body that the LORD JESUS feeds you at His table; and it is that same sin-pardoning Blood He offers to quench your sin-parched thirst. Through His Body and Blood, He makes us partakers of His divine nature and shares with us all that is His.

Is it any wonder then, that at the center, at the very center of the Church’s worship, stands the Holy Altar bearing the Body and the Blood of God’s Lamb? Every place in the world where the true Church gathers, She sets up that Holy Table at CHRIST’s command, and issuing His gracious invitation, JESUS comes to meet Her there. His coming to Her in His Body and Blood joins the worship of that little community with the worship of all His saints and angels—in Heaven and on earth.

So, when you gather as His people in His Name, no matter how many people you happen to see around you, if you were to count those who are invisible but yet are truly there, you would soon realize that you never gather with fewer than millions of millions. CHRIST's Church truly is a mega-Church—the only variable is in how many you can physically see gathered around the Body and Blood of the Lamb, and the biggest gathering you can see is still only a miniscule fraction of all those who are gathered there around the Agnus Dei, *“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*

That is a great comfort to all those who have suffered, or are suffering, for the sake of CHRIST, for all those who are persecuted because of their faith, all those who feel isolated and alone. No matter if only two or three are gathered in His Name, where we find His Name, we find the Lamb, and where we find the Lamb, we find CHRIST JESUS present with His Bride and the whole Christian Church in Heaven and on Earth.

But it is characteristic of the gathering of the Church that it never focuses on itself; all who are there, the seen and the unseen, all are fixated on the Lamb, standing alive, but bearing the marks of His death. All are focused on Him and what He has done for the life of the world; all are focused on His Body, given for you, and His Blood shed for you for the remission of the sins of the entire world. All are praising the *“power, power, [the] wonder-working power of the precious Blood of the Lamb”* for, indeed, *“By this Blood, redeemed and living, LORD, I praise Thee with thanksgiving.”* (TLH 305:9). Amen.

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