

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying: “Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!”

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?” ¹⁴ I answered, “Sir, you know.”

And he said, “These are they who are coming out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore, “they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. ¹⁶ Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (NIV84)

Theme: The Lamb is our Shepherd.

1. He became like us to give us his salvation.
2. He leads us to life-giving water.

Every group needs a leader of some sort. That is just how things work out. No matter what type of group it is someone needs to take charge. But sometimes a group is incapable of leading themselves. Take a group of toddlers for example—they need a mom or a teacher to lead them or they would accomplish nothing. Or consider a group of lambs as another example. A lamb needs a shepherd. And today we see that the Lamb is our Shepherd. Jesus because a lamb like us to give us his salvation and he leads us to life-giving water.

In chapter 53 Isaiah compares us to sheep. **We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.** From time to time sheep will go away from the pack. They will sneak off on their own. And suddenly they will find themselves somewhere where they shouldn't be. They lead themselves away from food and water. We are like sheep. We may wander around, doing our own thing. And we get ourselves in trouble. We find ourselves doing what we shouldn't be doing, or in a place where we shouldn't be. We suddenly realize that we left other sheep and have no nourishment for our souls. We are left to defend ourselves. And that is something a lamb cannot do. It is a weak, defenseless creature. It's not big, fast, or strong. It has no natural way of defending itself. It needs a guardian. It needs something to protect it from its enemies. Another Lamb won't do. They are incapable of leading themselves.

We are the same way. We are weak, defenseless creatures. We have no way of defending ourselves against the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. We are often led astray. And thus we lie wide open for the devil to attack us. We need a guardian, a protector. And another human won't do. We need someone to take care of us—to guard us and feed us, and watch over our every need. We need a Shepherd like sheep need a shepherd.

So Jesus became a sheep. He became like one of us. The eternal, almighty God became a weak and defenseless creature. God became a man. He became a lamb. He became like us in every way. With one exception, of course. Jesus was without sin. Not once did he stray away from God's Word and go his own way.

Throughout Scripture Jesus is called a Lamb. In Isaiah 53, one verse after we are called sheep, Isaiah prophesies about Jesus' suffering and death. **He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.** In Revelation Jesus is often referred to as a Lamb. We see him in chapter five standing before the throne of God. There the inhabitants of heaven bow down and worship him as God and the world's Savior. John sees more of the same here in chapter seven. Three times in our text Jesus is referred to as the Lamb.

It is a reference to his sacrificial death. Throughout the time of the Old Testament lambs were offered up to God as sacrifices. Through their death God forgave the sins of his people. Innocent blood was shed in behalf of the guilty party. So through the blood of the lamb sins were removed. Through the blood of the lamb sinners were made pure. The death of these lambs point us to the death of The Lamb. For Christ too gave up his life on the cross. And through his death he paid the price for our sins. And he makes us righteous.

And so John sees people in heaven in white. John said about the great multitude in heaven, **They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.** Later an elder explains to who these people were, **These are they who are coming out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.** These are those who suffered through this life. Who have been beaten down by sin and its effects and have made it through to the other side. They have stayed strong in the faith. And they received what Christ won for them—a white robe.

By nature our robes as stained blood red. Red because of the guilt of our sins. But through the blood of Christ our sins have been removed. Our garments—stained with sin, have been removed. Washed clean through the blood of the Lamb. Now they are white—pure and innocent. For we have been made holy like Jesus. We have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

And so he accomplished our salvation. That is, he forgives our sins. And he gives us the gift of eternal life. Jesus became a lamb like us so that he could die in our place. So that he could suffer through hell in our place. So that he could take our sins upon himself. So that he could give us his perfect life. In other words he became a lamb so that he could give us his salvation. That is why those in heaven sang his praise. **Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.**

Not only is Jesus a lamb who gives us his salvation; but he is also our shepherd who leads us to the waters of life.

What a contradiction. The Lamb is also a shepherd. As we see in verse 19. **The Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd.** The Lamb who gave up his life and died is the shepherd

who lives and reigns forever in heaven. The dead lamb now lives as a victorious shepherd. What a contradiction! What a paradox! The first hymn we'll sing for communion today makes a reference to this apparent inconsistency. Apparent, yet both are true.

For every group needs a leader. And sheep can't lead themselves. But there is a sheep who is also a shepherd. And he gives to give us what we couldn't give ourselves. He accomplished what a mere lamb could never accomplish. So he our Good Shepherd. As Jesus said in John 10, **I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.** Or in our gospel for today, **My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.**

Jesus gives us eternal life. For John says about this Shepherd/Lamb, **he will lead them to springs of living water.** This is a reference to Psalm 23, perhaps the most well-known Psalm. It is one of the most beloved portions of Scripture. **The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.** Jesus is our Shepherd who leads us to eternal life. With him as our leader we don't need anything else. He gives us more than we can ever ask. He gives us all that we could ask.

Jesus makes a reference to this water when he was talking to a Samaritan women at Jacob's well. **Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.** The water that Jesus gives is faith in him. This comes to us through his gospel. Through the word and sacraments Jesus brings us to faith in him and keeps us in the one true faith. Sheep need to be led to food and water. Without someone to show it to them they would not survive. The same stands for us. We need Jesus to bring us to the faith-giving water. For we can't come to faith on our own—we are blind to the way of salvation. Without him we are dead. So Jesus leads us to faith—to the springs of living water.

He has not only taken away our sins, but he also gives us eternal life. For they belong to him. The forgiveness of sins and eternal life are his. Salvation is his. And he graciously gives them to us. His

salvation is now ours. His forgiveness of sins and eternal life our now ours. He gives it to us through faith. Through faith he receive his salvation.

And so we will be in heaven. Along with all other believers. John got a glimpse of us. He saw **a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.** Because of Christ we will live and reign with him forever. We will be next to him singing his praises. And serving him. John also received a glimpse of what we'll be doing in heaven. **They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple** Day and night with our God, praising and serving our Shepherd who became a lamb to save us.

Our Shepherd leads us to heaven. A place of peace and rest. A place free from sins and its effects. Because Jesus is our Shepherd we will not be in want. John described heaven this way. **Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.** A place with no problems, no pain, no desires. Because our Shepherd has provided everything for us. All we need—forgiveness and eternal life—given to us for free. Plus in heaven, **God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.** Every painful thing we experience God will remove. No pain or sorrow in heaven. Whatever we suffered through in this world, God has taken care of. Whatever causes anxiety or anguish God will remove. No reason to fret or worry. No reason to cry. For we will live with our Shepherd. We **will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

Every group needs a leader. We have one—one who became a lamb like us, yet is our Shepherd. A Shepherd who gave up his life only to rise. A Shepherd who clothes us in the white robes of his perfection. A shepherd who leads us to springs of living water. A Shepherd who gives us his salvation. Amen.