

**Heaven’s Show Stopping Number**

**November 5, 2017**

**All Saints Sunday**

**Revelation 7:9-17**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lamb who is still sitting at the center of the throne of God, amen.

I remember the first musical play PJ and I attended. It was Cats. I bought the tickets for her birthday. At the time we lived in San Antonio so, I guess it was somewhere between 1993 and 1995. I totally dreaded going. I had no interest in drama, let alone musical drama. I was an Airman, a trained warfighter, not some society musical attending momma’s boy. But it was her birthday and that’s what she really wanted. So, off to the Majestic Theater we went. It usually takes quite a lot to change my mind about something. One of the truly Musser traits is our tendency toward stubbornness. At the risk of losing my man card I have to admit I began to enjoy that musical. I actually liked it so much we went out and purchased season tickets to all the remaining shows that were offered that year. That’s a family tradition we still have to this day. In fact, one of my favorite musicals is being brought back in the spring this year, Phantom of the Opera at the Schuster in Dayton. One thing that I’ve noticed about all these musicals is they normally have one big “Show Stopping” number. In Cats the song Memory is that Show Stopper. A show stopper is a musical number where all the action stops and the character belts out a song that encompasses the theme or main plot of the play. In a really great Show Stopper, as the song progresses, eventually all the characters get involved, even the ones who weren’t in the scene come on stage and form the chorus. Nobody is left out of the Show Stopping Number!

I think that’s exactly what’s happening in our first lesson from the Revelation to John. The lesson starts out saying, “After this…” After what? When we pick up the story today, John is in the middle of relating his revelation given to him while he was exiled on the island of Patmos, which is a tiny island off the coast of what is now Turkey. John has been describing the opening of the seven seals and all the destruction that has been or will be leveled upon planet Earth and the inhabitants. Right before the seventh seal is opened and more devastation is let loose upon the Earth, an angel announces with a loud voice, “Stop everything!” Hold up a minute or so, we have something more important to do right now than worry about what calamity comes next. At that very moment a multitude so great, nobody could count them all, begins the heavenly “Show Stopping Number.” Now, I’ve got good news and bad news. The good News is there’s apparently a lot of singing in Heaven. The bad news for those that wish we could make our songs a bit shorter is, there a lot of singing in heaven and everyone joins the chorus. I certainly hope that along with the “perfect” body comes at least a little bit of an ear for music… I guess when everyone picks up the beat singing with joy, those of us who can’t carry a tune are somehow able to blend in with all of you who can. I was once told by the choir director at another church to just mouth the words of the song…

After the show stopping number has concluded and things are getting back to normal, whatever that means for heavenly beings, the question is raised, “Who are these robed in white and where’d they come from?” That’s a really good question of us to ponder on All Saints Sunday. Who are all those folks gathered around the throne and where’d they come from anyway? The elder answers his or her own question, this must have been a teaching moment, these are the ones who have come through the ordeal and washed in the blood of the lamb. I believe the ordeal is life. Notice these have come through the ordeal. They weren’t raptured out and taken away from the ordeal. They had to go through it. These are the dearly departed who have already gone ahead into the heavenly kingdom. As Saint Paul put it, these are the ones who have finished the race and won the prize of glory. These are the ones marked on their foreheads with, not the mark of the beast, but the mark of Christ.

In Holy Baptism we continue the tradition started way back by the early Church of using oil to mark the cross of Jesus on the forehead of all those who are Baptized. In just a few minutes Brynnlee will receive her mark just like everyone of you received at your Baptism. This scene from heaven, complete with the show stopping number and the innumerable chorus, is a glimpse of what Brynnlee has to look forward to. We all look to that day when we get to join the chorus singing praises to the one who creates, the one who redeems, and the one who calls and gathers us into communion; The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For those who aren’t necessarily looking forward to all that singing, there is much more good news in store. The reason behind all the singing is because of the love and care we receive from that very God. Just look at what is revealed to us through John. God shelters us, shepherds us, and takes away our pain and sorrow. How wonderful the day when the pain of loss we’ve all felt is finally wiped away by none other than our very own God Almighty. The God who created the heavens and Earth and who keeps the planets in their orbits stoops down to me and to you to wipe away our tears.

I don’t know about you, as for me, that’s something to sing about. That’s something worth stopping whatever we’re doing to gather around the Word and the Sacraments of God and sing praises to the one who has blessed us beyond imagining. May we be included in the heavenly show stopping number today and every time we gather in the Name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit. May we give thanks for God including Brynlee today in this never-ending song of praise. Until that day when we gather around the throne in heaven, may God use each one of us to shelter God’s beloved, to lead them as a shepherd to fine pastures and living waters, and to comfort those who still grieve in pain over the loss of their beloved. Amen.