

## “Easter People Worship Passionately”

Scripture: Revelation 5:11-14

Graphics: cross, Easter, worship

Big Truth: We are Easter people - people who are transformed because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and alive and living in us. What’s our response? Our response is to live the everlasting Kingdom today as Easter people who passionately worship God, who witness boldly to the Risen Christ, who love God and others extravagantly, who follow Jesus unswervingly, and who hope confidently in the new Kingdom and new Earth. We are Easter people!

Focus Phrase: Easter people passionately worship the Triune God at all times in all ways!

### 1. Introduction

- A. **PRAY!** (*Jesus, you are Lord...*)
- B. Let’s once again proclaim the Good News of Easter together. Ready?  
**He is RISEN! He is RISEN INDEED!**
- C. Jesus Christ is risen from the grave! Jesus Christ is alive and living IN US!
- D. Easter is not one day of many for us as followers of Jesus. Every day is Easter because Jesus is STILL ALIVE!
- E. If you’re a Penn State fan, you know that there’s a call and response to being a Nittany Lion that goes like this: WE ARE! (and you reply) PENN STATE. But all you really need to say is WE ARE! and people just know that you identify with Penn State.
- F. That’s fine and all, but compared to the reality of our identity with the Risen Lord, IN CHRIST, by His death and resurrection, it PALES...
- G. For followers of this Jesus, WE ARE! ...EASTER PEOPLE!
- H. Let’s try that as a call and response. **WE ARE! EASTER PEOPLE! WE ARE! EASTER PEOPLE! WE ARE! EASTER PEOPLE!**
- I. Easter people...the people that have been, are being, and will be TRANSFORMED by the presence and power of JESUS...the name above ALL names. The name that changes lives. The name that fixes relationships and reconciles the lost. The name - Jesus - that is the name above ALL names.
- J. Philippians 2:9-11 says that after Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead, “...God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
- K. The reality in the Kingdom of God is that, at the end of all things, every knee that was ever created - every person (in fact, every creature ever created) WILL BOW BEFORE JESUS.

- L. This picture of the Kingdom coming when Jesus returns is a mystery and awe and hope and wonder. Yet, it's the promise of God to us - his Easter people.
- M. Today, we're starting a new worship series called just that - **Easter People**.
- N. We'll spend 5 weeks in the book of Revelation, which is an apocalyptic vision from a disciple named John. We'll talk about him a little more in a minute.
- O. But here's where we're heading: Easter people are those who've been and are being transformed by the very presence of Jesus in our lives. We're all at different places in that, but we're all agreeing together that Jesus is Lord and will be reigning as King forever and ever in His kingdom to come.
- P. As Easter people, we can live into the worship, witness, love, discipleship, and hope that's being experienced RIGHT NOW in heaven...as the saints and angels are worshiping Him...and with the CHURCH today.
- Q. We are Easter people! And Easter people **worship passionately, witness boldly, love extravagantly, follow unswervingly, and hope confidently**.
- R. Each week, we'll be taking a look into the heavenly realm though the Book of Revelation and expectantly prepare for the day when all will be made right and Jesus comes back to reign in His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.
- S. So, take a deep breath, and turn to your neighbor and say, "Let's GO!"
- T. The first stop on this journey is **passionate worship**. Easter People Worship Passionately.
- U. Johnathan Powers said, "Worship is the central act of the church and the chief end of the Christian life...worship is first and foremost a communal encounter with the Triune God who loving actions and merciful character evoke gratitude, adoration, and fidelity...worship is not about what the church produces for God. Rather, worship is about what God has done, is doing, and will do for the church." (The Next Methodism, 229-230)
- V. The church of Jesus Christ didn't invent worship...we don't DO worship. The worship team and leaders work hard to develop the space and elements to allow us to engage in worship, for sure. But worship is a mirror of what's already happening in the heavenly realm.
- W. I thought about starting this sermon with fancy illustrations of worship, but I couldn't wait to get to the text...so let's DO THIS!
- X. Turn with me, Easter People, to Revelation 4 and 5...

## 2. Scripture

- A. The book of Revelation is full of surprises.
- B. A pastor named John was the author of this book. As a leader of the first-century church, he had special concern for "the seven churches that are in Asia" (Revelation 1:4), and at the time he wrote this, he was living in exile, "...

on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (1:9).

- C. Chances are, he was sent there by the Romans because he insisted on saying that his Lord was Jesus, rather than the Roman emperor.
- D. So there he was, minding his own business on a Sunday (the book of Revelation says that it is “...the Lord's day,” (1:10), when suddenly he was summoned to “...come up...” to heaven (4:1).
- E. In his Sunday worship, he was transported to heaven. Woah! What would that even be like, especially in the middle of a routine Sunday worship service.

**F. But what did John see there?**

G. Well, here’s the vision (we see this in chapters 4 and 5):

- i. Sitting on a throne was Almighty God, looking like the gemstones, jasper and carnelian. God was enclosed by an emerald-like rainbow, and his throne were surrounded by four living creatures with many watchful eyes. The four creatures were surrounded by 24 white-clothed elders and their thrones.
- ii. So...let yourself picture the scene:
  - a. The throne of God at the center of two concentric circles of worshipers.
  - b. In the inner circle were four magnificent creatures with eyes and wings, resembling a lion, an ox, a human being and an eagle (4:7); four powerful creatures, often associated with the gospel-writers Mark, Luke, Matthew and John.
  - c. In the outer circle were 24 elders representing the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 disciples of Jesus - people from the Old Testament and the New. The full story of God’s divine history and future, gathered together around the Throne!
  - d. **And what were they doing??** One thing: They were **worshipping God together!**
    - i) This heavenly court threw themselves completely into passionate worship. The four creatures unceasingly singing, “...holy, holy, holy...” to praise “the Lord God the Almighty” (4:8).
    - ii) In sync with them, the 24 elders in the outside circle fall down before the throne, saying in unison that God is **worthy** “...to receive glory and honor and power” because God created all things (4:10-11).
  - e. If this were today, what we have here is a **flash mob** of worshipers. John saw the Lord God Almighty, reigning over heaven and Earth, and a flash mob of beings worshipping.

- i) I saw a video once of one flash mob that appeared in shopping mall, which surprised people by singing the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's Messiah.
  - ii) Flash mobs appear to be spontaneous - they're surprising and inspiring, bringing worship into the middle of typically secular spaces.
  - iii) Just sit with that for a second...wow!
- H. As amazing as that seems, it gets better! John saw the elders and 4 living creatures worshipping. But then we read THIS in 5:11-14...
- I. Read Revelation 5:11-14**
- J. So not only are the 4 creatures and the elders worshipping, but then John saw thousands and thousands of angels surrounding them, around the throne, SINGING! Myriads and myriads are a countless number...usually used in reference to an army. He saw armies and armies of angels singing WITH FULL VOICE! I can't imagine how LOUD that would be.
  - i. They were singing this: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered..." That's Jesus...died and resurrected! Jesus is worthy of passionate worship.
  - ii. He died to receive this: power...and wealth...and wisdom...and might...and honor...and glory...and blessing!
  - iii. That's what the angels were singing...with full voice! But that's not all!
- K. John then saw EVERY CREATURE in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and in the sea, and all that is in the seas SINGING...worshipping!
  - i. Were there any creatures on the sidelines in this worship? **No!**
  - ii. Were there any living things riding the bench of worship? **Not one!**
  - iii. EVERY means every! All! Everywhere...in heaven and earth, in the sea and under the earth. All those who believe in Jesus!
  - iv. Look, this picture that John sees is exactly the same as what Paul sang in Philippians 2...that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Jesus is Lord!

### 3. Application

- A. Whew! Let's take a breather...what does all this mean for us Easter People today? As people who confess that Jesus is Lord, then what does that mean for OUR worship?
- B. I can think of a few things right off the bat:
  - i. First, our worship should **never be boring!** The worship going on in heaven is ANYTHING but boring. Ours should never be, either.
  - ii. And, our worship should ALWAYS be **focused on the One** on the Throne! Never the pastor, choir, praise team, children, or anything else, ever!

- iii. Our worship should always be **communal**...together! Even those worshipping online are invited to engage together in-person as much as possible.
  - iv. And, we as worshipers are to be **passionate**. We only get to do this together once per week usually. We **MUST** make it the best hour of the week for it's the best picture of heaven on earth we'll ever get! And we **NEED** more heaven on this messed up earth right now!
- C. **So how do we do that?** What are some of the things we can **DO** to be Easter people who are passionate about worship?
- i. I think the answer comes in two parts. The first is what **YOU** do, as an Easter person, to prepare for worship. The second part is what **WE** do, as Easter people, while we're here.
  - ii. I also fully know that you and I will have times of worship throughout the week, in our homes and here at church. But this worship we do on Sunday morning is the culmination of all that.
  - iii. We're part of the collection of **EVERY CREATURE** on the Earth that are summoned to worship the Triune God! We are the flash mob that gathers to worship passionately right here every week!
- D. Let's look at that first part...how to **PREPARE** for passionate worship:
- i. In order to prepare your heart to be overflowing in passionate worship, you have to spend time being filled up with God's love and grace and mercy during the week.
  - ii. That happens as you pray, read scripture, and spend time with other believers.
    - a. Every time you spend time talking with and listening to God in prayer, your spiritual tank gets a little more in it.
    - b. Every time you read about the God who created, sustains, and redeems you, that tank gets a little more in it.
    - c. As you sing songs of praise and listen to music that proclaims the goodness of God, the needle goes up!
    - d. As you spend time with God's people, in Bible study or a ministry team, God puts some more spiritual fuel in your tank.
    - e. **SO THAT**, by the time you get to Sunday worship, the tank is sloshing so much that when you're walking or driving to church, you're already spilling some on the road. I envision the people of the Panama UMC leaving a trail of Jesus fluid on the road all the way to church...so that others will wonder what's happening here! Maybe follow you in!
    - f. Now, the opposite is true as well. If you spend all your time during the week allowing the world to drain your spiritual tank, without regularly

allowing Jesus to refill it, then when you get to worship on Sunday, you might get some infilling, but it won't overflow in passionate expressions of worship. It's like allowing your gas tank to run down to empty and then filling it up to 1/4 tank just so you can get through the next trip.

- g. Get close to God during the week and when you get to Sunday morning, He'll be blinding you in His glory!
  - h. N.T. Wright said, "Put it this way: if your idea of God, if your idea of the salvation offered in Christ, is vague or remote, your idea of worship will be fuzzy and ill-formed. The closer you get to the truth, the clearer becomes the beauty, and the more you will find worship welling up within you."
  - i. Get close to Him! Let God fill you up during the week so that you will not only be filled to the brim THEN, but it will overflow and you won't be able to contain it HERE! THAT's the vision of the passionate worship around the Throne of God! And it can be in YOUR life too!
- E. Then, as we come together in THIS place, we will pray, and sing, and read the word, and **BE TOGETHER** around the Throne with and for God.
- i. John Wesley, the founder the Methodist movement said, "In divine worship, (as in all other actions,) the first thing to be considered is the end, and the next thing is the means conducing to that end. The end is the honour of God, and the edification of the Church; and then God is honoured, when the Church is edified. The means conducing to that end, are to have the service so administered as may inform the mind, engage the affections, and increase devotion."
  - ii. The picture of worship from John Wesley and from Revelation is not people sitting in pews politely listening to the guy up front, tempted to let mind wander and distractions take over.
  - iii. Passionate worship is focused affections from our hearts...mind engaged with the prayers and spoken word...and songs sung in praise to the One seated on the Throne. It's us joining the angels and creatures that are already worshiping and adding our voices in praise and thanksgiving.
  - iv. Speaking of music: There's no doubt that music is a critical piece of worship in God's Kingdom. I know that not everyone is super-musical. Not everyone can sing or play well. Yet, there's nowhere in the bible that says you have to sing well to sing praises to God! Psalm 100:1 in the King James Version says, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands."
  - v. John Wesley gave instructions for singing to the Methodist bands and societies he organized in the 1700s. Nowhere does he say you must be a professional singer. He only says learn the songs, sing them as presented, sing all

of them, sing lustily and with good courage, sing modestly, and sing in time. But the **last rule is the best**: “Above all, **sing spiritually**. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature.” He wrote that in 1761.

- vi. When you come to worship, leave your self-consciousness at the door of the sanctuary. Abandon yourself to the full reality that Jesus loves you, saved you, and wants your full worship! Nothing less. This may take some practice. But you’re among loving friends who are all being filled to overflowing in worship.
- vii. When we pray, pray passionately. When we sing, sing passionately. When we read the word, be at the edge of your seat. When we baptize and celebrate communion (like today), do that with joy and hope! He is WITH US. He is IN US!
- viii. The worship leaders will do our very best to help us. We aren’t perfect and we make mistakes. The AV Team will do their very best to help us hear and see. But, they aren’t perfect either.
- ix. That’s why we need the power and presence of the Holy Spirit with us...we need the Throne of God in our midst...and we need Jesus to be right here with us!
- x. Worship should be like NOTHING else you ever do during the rest of your life. Worship IS like nothing else...we should be ready to engage in passionate worship like nothing else.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- A. You and I are being invited - encouraged and shown how - to worship passionately as Easter people. Let’s be a flash mob in this place!
- B. WE ARE! EASTER PEOPLE! who passionately give praise and thanks to God for all He has done, is doing, and will do.
- C. In the midst of a world that’s chaotic and raw - filled with so much that tempts us to fear and struggle - passionate worship draws us to the very heart a loving God who’s in the middle of it all...to show us mercy. To give us grace. And to remind us who we are to Him and who He is to us.
- D. Easter people passionately worship the Triune God at all times in all ways!
- E. Let’s pray and then continue worshiping through Holy Communion!!!
- F. **PRAY!**