

## “Easter People Witness Boldly”

Scripture: Revelation 7:9-17

Graphics: cross, Easter, worship, Throne

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 witness boldly to others about the salvation offered in Jesus!

### 1. Introduction

- A. **VIDEO - EASTER PEOPLE** (play right after the special music)
- B. **“WE ARE!” “EASTER PEOPLE!”** (3X)
- C. Easter people are those who are following Jesus - the One who walked out of his own grave under His own power on the **FIRST** Easter.
- D. Easter matters! The resurrection matters! It mattered to the first disciples, including the women who followed Jesus. It mattered to the early church, who were martyred for their faith in Jesus.
- E. It matters to the saints and angels who are passionately worshiping Jesus right now in the spiritual realm of heaven - as we read from Revelation 5 last week.
- F. And...it matters to US, as 21st-century followers of Jesus, sandwiched in time between those who have come before us, and those who will come after us in the faith.
- G. People like your great-grandmothers, grandmothers, and mothers who nurtured you and your family in the faith. We honor them today, along with all mothers. You are witnesses for Jesus to others!
- H. This sermon series is called **Easter People**.
- I. Last week, we started the series by proclaiming that Easter People Worship Passionately. I pray you allowed God to fill up your spiritual tank to overflowing this week...that you arrived here today with a full tank, sloshing and ready to worship! I think I saw some Jesus fluid in the parking lot.
- J. This week, our message is entitled **Easter People Witness Boldly**.
- K. Romans 10:14 asks, “But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?”
- L. We are Easter people called to proclaim the Good News to our hurting and broken world in need of a Savior...and to encourage each other!

- M. In Revelation 7 - our reading for today - John had a vision of a great multitude of people standing before the throne - witnesses for us to the saving power of Jesus Christ. Those were faithful people who MADE IT!
- N. Reading this chapter of Revelation is like being able to look through a special lens that allows us to see OUR future as well, as Easter People... all those saints witnessing for us...calling us to BE witnesses for Jesus in this world from the heavenly realm.
- O. **Easter People Witness Boldly.** We are Easter People. We are called to receive the witness of the saints and then BE the witnessing saints.
- P. Let's **PRAY!** (*Jesus, you are Lord...*)
- Q. If you're taking notes, write this down: **Easter people witness boldly to others about the salvation offered in Jesus!**
- R. What we'll see is that the multitude around the Throne are those who have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. THAT's a witness and encouragement for us...and we're called to then witness to others with our words and our lives, as we worship passionately the One on the Throne.
- S. Let's turn to Revelation 7, starting in verse 9...

## 2. Scripture

### A. **READ Revelation 7:9-12**

- B. We're spending 5 weeks in the book of Revelation...which tells of a vision given to a pastor named John...who was invited to, "...come up into heaven..." while he was in exile from the Romans authorities on the island of Patmos.
- C. As we turn to Revelation 7, we're still overlooking the Throne of God, with the 4 living creatures closest to the Throne. On the Throne sits King Jesus - the Lamb Who Was Slain - and the 24 elders who are around the 4 living creatures.
- D. John also saw and heard thousands and thousands of angels in an army who were surrounding the elders...all singing in full voice...passionately worshipping!
- E. And then, John saw and heard countless creatures from the Earth and sea... surrounding the angels, praising God...worshipping God...singing, and bowing down before God.
- F. Got that image in your mind?
- G. After that scene in chapter 5, John saw a few more things happen around the Throne. John saw a scroll in Jesus' hand and it had 7 seals on it (think wax seals in 18th century England, not blubbery sea creature). Jesus opened six of the seven seals on that scroll, and John saw all kinds of terrible things happened on the earth...massive earthquakes and the moon becoming like

blood, and four horses of different colors riding in from four directions. He saw a vision of the martyrs that had died for their faith in Jesus. That's all in Revelation 6.

- H. John then heard the angels talking and placing a mark of some kind on the faithful Jewish saints from the nation of Israel, which apparently protects them from harm. No one really fully understands all that John saw, but we know for sure that God has a plan to save all who are faithful, Jews and Gentiles.
- I. It's to the Gentiles that we turn our attention in the first part of today's reading - a great multitude of people (so big it couldn't be counted).
  - i. And not just any people - people from every nation...from all tribes and peoples and languages.
  - ii. One of the question that pastors get asked when they interview for ordination in the UMC is about the Kingdom of God. What is the Kingdom of God? My favorite answer to that question has to do with the fact that EVERY tribe, EVERY people group, EVERY language, EVERY size, shape, and color...will be represented around the Throne. People who look like us and people who don't. People who speak like us and people who don't. People who think like us and people who don't. All gathered around the Throne with one thing in common: they believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior.
  - iii. All the things that we can think of that divide us in THIS life are not dividers in the Kingdom of God. We see it around the Throne in this vision. My favorite conclusion to that ordination question is: "Well, I guess we better get used to worshipping together with all the other Jesus people while we're here on Earth so we can be ready for the Kingdom coming."
  - iv. Who are these saints? In the Apostles' Creed we call them the communion of saints (I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the **communion of saints**, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.)
  - v. We believe in the communion of saints. We believe that, right now, there is a gathering of souls that were once in the bodies of people who have died, who had faith in Jesus Christ, who are at this moment, worshipping together somehow in the heavenly realm.
  - vi. This communion of saints are like silent partners in a business deal. They fund a business venture so that the project can succeed. The communion of saints doesn't provide us with money, but gives us spiritual capital so we can succeed.
  - vii. "Saint" literally means "holy one." The witness of these holy ones - these silent partners who enjoy a new and perfected life in the heavenly realm - collectively lends support to the church's efforts to be faithful here on earth.

- viii. The communion of saints doesn't scrounge up venture capital, of course, but their constant prayer on our behalf is worth far more. They don't intervene in our work, but are praying for us and cheering for us!
- ix. As long as there is a communion of saints - and the promise of Revelation is that their heavenly witness is eternal - we're never lacking in spiritual capital. They are our silent partners.
- x. But who are they? Let's look at verse 13...

**J. READ Revelation 7:13-17**

- i. The communion of saints are all those believers who have faithfully lived and died IN CHRIST.
- ii. They MADE IT...made it through the **ordeal**. In this case, the ordeal is all the things that God permits to happen in this life before Jesus returns. Some of those things are envisioned in Revelation 6 - the earthquakes and persecution and moon turning to blood.
- iii. Other things are what happen to us in the course of life as followers of Jesus. Maybe disease...maybe struggles...spiritual warfare...consequences of sin and forgiveness. This ordeal has much to do with **not conforming to the ways of this world**, but to God's standards alone.
- iv. We've all been through ordeals and trials. And we will all go through ordeals and trials. I don't know what the future holds, but, "...*in this life you will have trouble*," said Jesus.
- v. Yet, the communion of saints - who we strive to be someday - have had their robes washed white. They've been forgiven and set free and have been ushered into the presence of God!
- vi. They're a bold witnesses to the saving power of God through Jesus. How do we know that? BECAUSE THEY'RE STANDING IN THE PRESENCE OF A HOLY GOD. If they hadn't been redeemed by Jesus, they'd have already been destroyed in His presence because of their sin.
- vii. So...here's the witness to us: **As go the saints who are around the Throne...so go all Easter People**. They're there and God wants us to know about it, so that we can see their witness and prepare for that. And invite others to see it and strive for it.
- viii. "LOOK, they say! LOOK at where we are! We are standing in the presence of almighty God! We MADE IT!"
- ix. It's like they're sending us a postcard that says, "Can't wait for you to be here with us! Keep up the good work!"
- x. Unfortunately, all we have now is the t-shirt that says, "My saintly uncle is worshiping at the Throne of God and all I got was this lousy t-shirt."

- xi. We aren't there yet. We're still HERE. But the THERE is real and the communion of saints is witness to it! The end of Rev. 7 says that the communion of saints is worshiping night and day. They're being sheltered by the Most High God. They're free from hunger and thirst, from sun and heat. Jesus is shepherding them and guiding them to springs of living water. And God is wiping away every tear.
- xii. When I lead funerals, I always read these promises to the family that remains behind. These promises are a witness to the love and grace of God. And it's our promise for the life everlasting to come.
- K. The communion of saints is a bold witness to the salvation offered in Jesus.

### 3. Application

- A. Let's see if we can get some application for us today as Easter People.
- B. We know right now we just have the t-shirt and aren't with God yet in the same way the saints are.
- C. Yet, because you and I have this glimpse into the heavenly realm through John's vision, we have **hope** and know that there's **more to life** than our circumstances...A LOT more!
- D. The communion of saints gives us a very clear message that we're not alone in this world. God is with us. The communion of saints is cheering us on and praying for us.
- E. We can also be encouraged because the saints' silent testimony is that they made it! They went through everything we're going through and reached the Throne of God, through the grace of God by faith in His Son Jesus. The promise we hold onto is that we will be there someday too!
- F. But in order to be Easter People who Boldly Witness to the reality of a loving God on a Throne waiting for us, what's our charge today? What are we to DO?
  - i. First, **Believe (confidently) that there is a Throne**
    - a. And I'm not just talking about a piece of furniture in a heavenly room somewhere.
    - b. You and I must come to grips with the truth that there is a Throne. And not only is there a Throne, but that **there's a KING that sits on it.**
    - c. The angels and saints aren't worshiping a Throne. They worship the KING, Jesus, who is sitting ON that Throne.
    - d. Every part of their lives bows down in reverence and obedience to the One seated on that Throne. If they acknowledge that it's a Throne, they have to acknowledge that there's a KING on it...and that King is not them...it's Jesus.

- e. You and I, if we are to be Easter People who passionately worship and boldly witness, **MUST** bow in reverence and obedience to **ONE King** and **ONE King** only. Jesus...seated on the Throne.
  - f. If we don't get **THAT** right, then not only will we not boldly witness to the world about Him, but we won't witness at all.
  - g. Believe there is a Throne with King Jesus on it.
- ii. Then, **Know that King Jesus Saves**
- a. The truth about Jesus and His saving grace is **THE** most precious and powerful Good News ever. And you, Easter People, hold it in your hand.
  - b. We so often fail to give that Good News away to those around us. Maybe we think that they won't receive it. Maybe we think they don't deserve it. Maybe we think we'll mess it up and lose our opportunity or our nerve.
  - c. It takes courage, for sure, but it also takes a conviction that without the One seated on that Throne and His sacrifice, we'd be separated from God forever.
  - d. One simple way I've found to put this in perspective as we turn our attention to boldly witnessing is to know The Four Alls. W. B. Fitzgerald summarized the Wesleyan aspects of salvation with these "Four Alls:"
    - i) All **NEED** to be saved... (for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...)
    - ii) All **CAN** be saved... (Jesus asks you, "What do you need me to do for you?")
    - iii) All can **KNOW** they are saved... John Wesley was big on the **ASSURANCE** of salvation...that we can **KNOW** we are saved.
    - iv) All can be saved to the **UTTERMOST**... Completely. Wholly.
  - e. With those four **ALLS**, comes the pathway for boldly witnessing to the world like the communion of saints witnesses to us. They prove it's true!
  - f. If all need to be saved and all **CAN** be saved, there's hope for everyone!
  - g. If everyone can **KNOW** they are saved and saved to the **UTTERMOST**, then everyone can reach the Throne of God together.
  - h. In this life, **YOU** are the witness with flesh on. You have seen the Throne Room and can testify that Jesus is changing your life.
- iii. So, finally, **Be a saint among us**
- a. What were the saints doing?
    - i) Worshiping. Inviting others to worship.

- ii) Giving testimony to all God has done, is doing, and will do in His world.
- iii) The saints were speaking the name of Jesus and being guided by him, sheltered by him, allowing God to wipe away every tear!
- iv) Get out there and love people. Share their pain and give them hope. This world is not all there is. Jesus is on the Throne and Jesus saves!
- v) Point to Him and say, “There He is! Let’s go with Him!”
- vi) Do that with your words. Do that with your actions. Do that with your desire to love others, be patient and kind. But DO it!

b. Be a Saints Among Us!

#### **4. Conclusion**

- A. WE ARE! EASTER PEOPLE!
- B. We worship passionately. We witness boldly.
- C. The communion of saints of shown us the way and are praying for us.
- D. Those saints among us are helping us by THEIR witness.
- E. Now, it’s your turn, saint. It’s YOUR turn.
- F. Witness Boldly to Jesus!
- G. Let’s pray...