

So, who is ready to celebrate?

Can I be honest with you? I'm not good at celebrating. I'm pretty bad at it. And it's not that a birthday, or holiday, or job promotion isn't great, it's just that I don't get worked up about a lot of things. And I tend to forget a lot of the details about these important events. Like, I don't know what day my wedding anniversary is. It's on either September 2nd or September 3rd, but I don't know which. Now in all fairness to me, Michele doesn't know either. Every once in a while, she'll run across our marriage certificate and say it's the 2nd or 3rd, but then eventually we'll both forget again. The bad news is that we're not really sure which day it is. The good news is that we'll celebrate both days.

I'm not good at celebrating things. And the older I get, the worse it gets. Like I don't celebrate holidays and events while they are going on, I celebrate them when they're done. The Trunk or Treat on Tuesday night was great. We had over 1100 people come through here. The kids loved it. But, do you know when I got excited? When it was done and the building had been put back together again.

I don't even celebrate sports like I used to. I get more upset when my South Carolina Gamecocks lose than I'm happy and excited when they win.

I think a lot of us probably struggle with this. So, this morning we are going to talk about celebrating. The Bible tells us to celebrate. **Philippians 4:4** says-**“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (NIV)**

The Bible says to rejoice, to celebrate. It didn't just say it once. It said it twice. That means that it is doubly important.

Please turn to **Revelation 4**. We're going to look at a celebration that is taking place, even as I speak. As you are turning to Revelation, also find something that you can take a couple of notes with (bulletin, phone, etc...).

¹Then as I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven, and the same voice I had heard before spoke to me like a trumpet blast. The voice said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this.”² And instantly I was in the Spirit,^[a] and I saw a throne in

heaven and someone sitting on it. ³ The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—like jasper and carnelian. And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow. ⁴ Twenty-four thrones surrounded him, and twenty-four elders sat on them. They were all clothed in white and had gold crowns on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning and the rumble of thunder. And in front of the throne were seven torches with burning flames. This is the sevenfold Spirit^[b] of God. ⁶ In front of the throne was a shiny sea of glass, sparkling like crystal.

In the center and around the throne were four living beings, each covered with eyes, front and back. ⁷ The first of these living beings was like a lion; the second was like an ox; the third had a human face; and the fourth was like an eagle in flight. ⁸ Each of these living beings had six wings, and their wings were covered all over with eyes, inside and out. Day after day and night after night they keep on saying,

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty—
the one who always was, who is, and who is still to come.”

⁹ Whenever the living beings give glory and honor and thanks to the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever), ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever). And they lay their crowns before the throne and say,

¹¹ “You are worthy, O Lord our God,
to receive glory and honor and power.
For you created all things,
and they exist because you created what you pleased.” (NLT)

What we’re looking at here is a celebration that is taking place around the throne of Jesus. And some of this seems a little bit weird. And it is. But remember that the Apostle John, who wrote these words, was trying to describe the heavenly realm with earthly words. Some of it probably gets lost a little bit in translation. We’re going to go through some of this and I’ll explain what I can. Scholars and Bible experts don’t agree on everything in Revelation. No one has all of this figured out. We just do the best we can.

John is called up in the spirit to the throne room of God. Verse 2 says that someone is sitting on the throne. Who? Jesus.

It says that Jesus was glowing like precious jewels. He's in his eternal, heavenly glory.

In verse 4 we see 24 elders seated on thrones. Scholars believe that these elders probably represent the 12 tribes of Israel plus the 12 Apostles. As a whole, they represent all of Christianity.

Next we see rolls of thunder and flashes of lighting from the throne of Christ. Scholars believe this represents the awesomeness and power of God. We also see this in the Old Testament when God would meet with Moses. So, it also could signify the presence of God.

We also see in verse 5 seven torches. Some scholars believe these represent the 7 churches found in chapter 1 of Revelation. Some believe they might refer to angels. Others believe they might refer to the 7 Spirits of God mentioned in **Isaiah 11:2- And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. (NLT)**

In verse 6 we see a shiny, sea of glass that sparkles like crystal in front of the throne. Scholars believe that this represents God's purity and holiness.

This is where it gets weird. Also, in verse 6 we see 4 living beings covered in eyes, front and back. In verse 7 it says that one was like a lion, one like an ox, one had a human face, and one like an eagle. Scholars say that these represent strength and power. What's cool is that each one of these is the chief of their species.

Each of these had 6 wings and even their wings were covered in eyes.

Now, here's the part that I like. In **verse 8** it says that day and night they declare **"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty-the One who always was, who is, and who is still to come"**.

How many times do they say God is holy? 3 times. Once is important. Twice is really important. Three times is extremely important. It's the most emphases you'll see in the Bible. That's how holy God is. He is not just holy. He is not holy, holy. He is holy, holy, holy.

Now, here's the first thing I want you to write down or take note of:

Celebration comes when we focus on the activity of God

We need to focus on the activity of God. We need to focus on how God moves in our lives. And when we do this, it will lead us to celebrate.

Verse 8 refers to the God who always was. That's talking about the past. How has God moved in the past? What has He done in the past that is worthy of celebrating?

What do we see in the Bible? Genesis 1. God created the universe. In verse 14-16 it says **"Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years."¹⁵ Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth." And that is what happened. ¹⁶ God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars." (NLT)**

God made 2 great lights, one for the day called the...and one for the night called the... Did you catch that last part? It was almost like a throw in. **"He also made the stars."**

What else did God do? He saved Noah and his family from the flood.

He saved Moses and nation of Israel by parting the Red Sea. You want to see something crazy? **Exodus 15:8** says **“At the blast of your breath, the waters piled up! The surging waters stood straight like a wall; in the heart of the sea the deep waters became hard.”**

What else did God do? There's story after story in the Old Testament of God performing miracles and rescuing and saving the nation of Israel (Judges, Prophets, King David, King Solomon, Jonah).

What about the New Testament? God sent Jesus to be born of a virgin, live a perfect life, die a horrible death, bear the sins of the world, and be raised to life again to show that death and hell have been defeated.

Those are just a few of the things that God has done that should make us want to celebrate.

I want us to do something a little bit different. I want you to take 30-45 seconds and write down some things that God has done in your life that should make you want to celebrate. How has God moved in your life? We're coming up on Thanksgiving. What are you thankful for?

Now let's focus on the God who is. He is not the just the God who always was. He is the God who currently is. God is moving right now in your life. Do you see him? What is He doing that maybe you haven't been paying attention to?

I think there are 2 reasons that we don't see God moving in our lives:

1. We aren't looking for Him. Plain and simple. We're just not looking.
2. We don't really believe what the Bible says. We hear verses like **Psalm 34:18-“The Lord is near to the broken hearted”** and we just don't believe it. Or we believe they are true, just not for us. Verses like that are for other people. Because when our hearts are broken, we're all alone. Or **Romans 8:28-“All things work together for the**

good of those who love Him and are called to His purposes.”

These aren't just words that we hang in picture frames on our walls or have stitched onto throw pillows for our couches. These words are true.

So, if you are struggling this morning, unsure if God is working in your life, I want to read a few verses over you this morning that hopefully, will encourage and uplift your souls and assure you that God IS working in your life:

Joshua 1:9-“Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid or dismayed. For the Lord, your God, is with you wherever you go”.

John 16:33-“I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

Isaiah 41:10-Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.

Psalm 55:22-Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall.

1 Peter 5:7-Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

Take another 30-45 seconds and write out some ways that God is currently moving in your life.

Now let's look at the God who is to come. What are you looking forward to God doing in your life? He might have already put some sort of indication in your heart or spirit as to how He is going to move. What is God going to do in the life of your child or children? What is God going to do in the life of

this church? How is God going to use you, bless you, grow you, correct you, change you, etc...? What relationship do you believe He will heal? What bondage or addiction do you believe He will break?

I want you to take another 30-45 seconds and write down some ways that you are looking forward to God moving in your life.

You might be in a point in your life where it's hard to look ahead. It's hard to imagine what God can or will do. But just know that there is One who IS to come and when He comes everything changes. All things will be made new. There will be no more pain, worry, cancer, hurt, loss, struggles, family issues, divorce, depression, etc... When that day comes, we will truly celebrate.

I want to show you guys a video. This is of my son Jackson at basketball camp this past summer. The video quality is horrible, but you'll get the idea. He gets to shoot a half-court shot and if he makes it, he wins \$20. I'm going to go ahead and tell you that he makes it (we were all very proud). But the part I really want you to see is how he reacts after he makes the shot.

That's how I want to celebrate in heaven. No holding back. Just pure joy and excitement. Because one day, verse 8 will read a little bit differently. The 4 living beings will no longer say "**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty-the one who always was, and who is, and who is to come.**" One day they will say "**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty-the one who always was, and who is.**" He will no longer be coming. He will have already arrived. And we will be with Him. And that is definitely something to celebrate.

Back to **Revelation 4**. In **verses 9 and 10** it says that whenever the 4 living beings around the throne worship Jesus, the 24 elders fall down before Jesus, lay their crowns at His feet and say "**You are worthy, O**

Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased.”

Let's read those words together.

“You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased.”