

I See You – 3. Diverse People, One Vision

Revelation 7:9-17

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When I was a teenager, I attended a national gathering of Christian youth where 40,000 teens came together from around the country for worship, service projects and learning. Now, I grew up in a town of just over 1,000 people and had 65 students in my entire grade. I'd never seen so many people gathered in once space.

As far as the eye could see, there were teenagers gathered. We were loud and excited, nervous and hopeful. We represented urban areas and rural communities. We were varied in our interests, our abilities, our family systems. We had a range of experiences in life and faith, but here we became united as one community.

The energy in the space was full: we were curious and hopeful, and mostly excited to be away from home on this adventure. Our keynote speaker was Desmond Tutu. This, in itself was an incredible gift and experience for all of us – to hear from such an impactful person and preacher. Tutu, you might remember, was an Archbishop in the Episcopal church, a human rights activist, and leader of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, working alongside Nelson Mandela. He won the Nobel peace prize for his work, and spent his life advocating not only for justice, but for peace and reconciliation. At the youth gathering, Tutu spoke in a bold voice, easily heard in every corner of the stadium, despite the excited noise of the crowd and poor acoustics. He told us that night:

"There is no future without forgiveness and reconciliation, If there is no forgiveness, then that relationship is doomed. There is no future."

As young as I was, I knew I was listening to a great prophet and preacher, witnessing something I'd remember forever. This man lived a life entirely different from my own. He was about 70 at the time, a short, black man from South Africa who had known segregation, abuse, and oppression. He had led the fight toward justice, not only working with world leaders, but *becoming* one himself. He spoke out, not only against segregation, but also in opposition to war, and campaigned for gender equality, gay rights and many human rights campaigns around the world. His heart beat with a desire and passion for God's justice for all people.

Though I was a wide eyed, young teenager from rural Minnesota with no tangible support experience like his, Desmond Tutu taught me about the kingdom of God and expanded my vision not only of what God desires for us, but my hand in it. He told us that night,

"God needs you to be his partner... God says, 'Hey, I have no one else but you to be my partner ... to help bring forgiveness in a world torn apart.' God says, 'I love you. I love you. I love you. You are special and I love you. Everything else is a response to my love. My love is one that will not change.'"

He continued: *"Like Martin Luther King Jr., God says, 'I have a dream. I have a dream for a new kind of world, one of forgiveness and reconciliation, ... kindness and sharing.' God says, 'I have you, and you, and you, and you, to realize my dream.' Go from here knowing that you are God's partner."*

That night was inspiring and challenging, making a deep impact on my faith and understanding of God. You see, Desmond Tutu taught me, something that we've been exploring together these last few weeks. He taught me about the importance of really *seeing* others, not to dismiss our differences, but to learn from and celebrate them. He taught me about the importance of acting for one another, especially when acting to right a wrong, or to stand up against injustices.

This was an important life lesson, not only for the thousands of teenagers gathered, but for all of us. Desmond Tutu's entire life taught that fighting for justice, celebrating diversity, and seeking unity – or reconciliation – are Biblical values and mandates. God calls all of us to be partners in

creating and building up the kingdom of God. Scripture is clear, that as people of God, we are to create belonging and seek justice for all people, by our love and forgiveness.

In Revelation, we hear the vision God has for God's people highlighted and vividly described. Beginning at 7:9 we read:

I looked, and there was a great crowd that no one could number. They were from every nation, tribe, people, and language. They were standing before the throne and before the Lamb...They cried out with a loud voice: "Victory belongs to our God who sits on the throne"

The kingdom of God is a place where every person finds belonging. Where our differences no longer divide, but unite us as the beautiful and vast images of God *within* us. God's kingdom is one where our differing nationalities, languages, experiences, and even sufferings are all pieces of a beautiful landscape of God's creation. Where together, we become one people who unite our voices in praise of God's goodness and power. Then, in verse 14, we learn a little bit more about who these people are, hearing this:

"These people have come out of great hardship... This is the reason they are before God's throne. They worship day and night in the temple, and the one seated on the throne will shelter them. They won't hunger or thirst anymore. No sun or scorching heat will beat down on them, because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them. God will lead them to the springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

What we hear in this passage is both a recognition of our sufferings *and* a promise that God is in the midst of it, bringing to us life-giving water. God sees us, and the pains and worries of our lives. God sees our tear-stained cheeks as we stay up at night worrying about someone we love. God hears our anxious thoughts about paying *another* unexpected bill that comes. God knows the pain of those experiencing violence: from the people of Israel and Palestine, to Ukraine, to the families and victims in Lewiston, Maine (*our most recent in a long line of mass shootings*).

One of the Hebrew names for God, often translated into "shepherd" means "*God who sees me*". This comforting image reminds us, that ours is a God who is deeply and intimately connected to the real-life pain and suffering ourselves and our world. We don't need to save face or dress up our life for God, hiding any blemish or imperfection. Instead, God *sees you* and will be as a Shepherd to you, guiding you toward life, belonging, and love.

God promises us a place without hunger or thirst, without pain, or death, or sadness. God's kingdom is a place where we find welcome with our whole selves: not just the pieces of us that are good or right, not just the "happy parts", but all of us. God sees our pains. God knows our struggles. God shares our hopes. And God will make us, all of us, one in Christ.

This desire for God's people to live in unity as one community is woven throughout scripture. And though our world is broken, and our systems work to divide us, rather than unite us, God calls us again and again to be a people who hold with hope as we work together to reveal God's vision among us.

In the life, teachings, and resurrection of Jesus, we see this on full display. Jesus is *always* casting wide the net. Calling to him tax collectors and fishermen, widows and children. Jesus creates a community filled, not with only the religious or elite, but made up of the full body of God: with our diverse and vast experiences, practices, and beliefs. Jesus reminds us that his life giving water is for all people. Not when we abandon the core parts of who we are, but when we embrace and celebrate *all* that we are.

This recognition of our whole selves, and God's healing power is one of the key goals of the entire book of Revelation. Now, I know this is a complicated book to read and understand. It is filled with a lot of complicated imagery, with a lot of destruction and darkness throughout.

Popular understanding guides us astray too, as this book is not intended to be a fortune telling of the “end times,” as if it is predicting the future.

Instead, it was written for a people who lived under great suffering and oppression. Emperor Domitian was the leader of the time, and he was known to be a cruel and brutal leader, bringing mass amounts of suffering, abuse, and death to many. This book is meant to portray the powers of evil active in the world, recognizing the suffering of God’s people. But it is not a book of warning or foreshadowing, it is a book of hope.

It calls us to be faithful amid our present struggles, trusting that God is with us and the kingdom of God is more powerful than the destructive forces of our world. The power of God to unite, is stronger than our fears or desires to divide.

Desmond Tutu wrote a children’s bible called “Children of God Storybook Bible,” and this is the final passage from the book, pulling from Revelation 21. It also speaks to this promised kingdom of God. You can see, an image of God’s life giving water, filled with people of every age and race, from various cultures and nations, all part of God’s collective dream for the world. Tutu paraphrases scripture, writing, *“You are my children. You are all brothers and sisters together, my family. Come and drink, my beloved children, from the water that gives you life, love, and joy!”*

Even in his writing here, you can sense Tutu knew that we are a people more comfortable staying in our “familiar boxes” of life. It is easier for us to be divided in our beliefs or preferences about how we worship, in our political ideologies, or lived experiences. But he also knew, and trusted, in God’s vision that it is the richness of our diversity that strengthens our unity. *You are all brothers and sisters together, family.*

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, highlighted this vision of God, too, when he called us to live in a spirit of unity saying, *“Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike?”* Wesley understood that God created us as people with diverse thinkings and understandings, and that we would not always be in agreement of how we understand the world around us or God’s working within it. Wesley didn’t mean that our differences in beliefs or experiences do not matter, or that we should gloss over them.

Rather, he understood that as Christians, and as Methodists, we are united by our love of God and our desire to build up the kingdom of God, sharing our love of God with our neighbors through our words and actions.

Like the people of Wesley’s time, like the people who first received the book of Revelation, we too are a people with hardships, worries and pain. We are a people who find our selves easily divided and stuck in fear. We might worry that by creating space to celebrate our unique differences and diversity, that there will be less room for “me”. That perhaps, if there is more room for people who are unlike me, who experience the world differently, or disagree with me – that somehow, I might be pushed out and forgotten.

And here, in our fears, reveals a shared truth. We all desire to be known, seen, and belong. The promise of God, is that there is *always* room for you. *And for you. And for you.*

The table of God is not fixed, but is ever-expanding. It is our differences and diversities that make us stronger as the body of Christ. It makes us more able to respond to the needs of God’s people, of God’s created world, by sharing our ideas, our gifts, and unique selves to make the world better.

God is in the business of disrupting the ways of our world, and with tender wisdom, guiding us into the loving arms of our Shepherd and Redeemer. Because the good news of God, the salvation and reconciliation of Christ, does not belong to any particular group or person. Rather it is a gift of God’s, freely given to us all.

God does not ask for us to be the same, or neatly together, but desires a community and world that is rich in diversity, filled with people of every generation and age, of all nations, languages, and race. That covers the breadth of any ways that “we” seek to divide us by politics or class, by our genders or sexuality, by our education or the neighborhood in which we live. We have all

been intentionally and carefully made in the image of God, and so it is only together – that we are made whole. This image is from another book by Desmond Tutu, called "God's Dream" and it is a beautiful story that invites children to be united in their love of one another. On this page, he wrote, *"Each of us carries a piece of God's heart within us. And when we love one another, the pieces of God's heart are made whole."* Again, I am struck by the ways that Tutu has brought to life the image of God's kingdom for us in ways that are simple and beautiful.

Now, I've shared two images from children's books by Desmond Tutu – and I've done so because I was thinking about him a lot this week, and because they are compelling in their invitation to help us imagine what the kingdom of God might look like for us. But also, because sometimes, it is the children who will lead us toward this vision.

As we age, it can be more difficult for us to break old habits or ways of thinking, or we might feel burned or discouraged from finding another way. I know that this has been true for me. It is easier for me to "write someone off" instead of being curious because they think differently than I do, or make assumptions about their beliefs or history.

Earlier this week, I was driving my boys to Kid Street on Wednesday night. And as we waited at a stoplight, there was a woman in the intersection with a sign, asking for help. She had a stroller with her, though it was being used to hold and transport her belongings, rather than a child. She looked cold, and alone. And her eyes seemed to wonder if anyone might see her.

As we pulled to a stop, from the backseat, I heard, "Mom, she needs help. I don't think she has a home. Do you have any money we can give her?" I happened to have a few dollars, and handed it to her. As I did, my boys shouted, "God loves you!" And she smiled at them, her eyes bright with recognition.

The rest of the drive, my boys wondered what they might do to next. They were curious about this woman and her life, rather than judgmental or afraid. They wondered if maybe she would come to church, or if we should have invited her with us. They asked if we could keep some snacks in the car, so we could share that with the next person. And they asked where they could give some of their own money to help others.

When we love one another, God's heart is made whole.

That night, my boys shared with me a glimpse of God's kingdom. This is what it means to see, act and create belonging for others. And it made me wonder, how much more rich our world might become, if we all approached one another with the same curiosity, care and love?

They made it seem so simple, after all. They didn't get caught up in judgement or fear. They didn't worry too much about saying or doing the right thing. They didn't over think it or freeze.

They just saw this woman as the beloved child of God that she is, and offered words of encouragement and a bit of help. And then, they wondered together how they might expand that place of belonging and safety for others.

Today's passage affirms a lived reality of God's kingdom where the full spectrum of humanity is present and united under divine care. We see glimpses of this reality when we create space to celebrate the diversity and belovedness of God's people.

Individually, this looks like noticing and seeing the person sitting next to you and saying hello, taking time to really hear and see them. Trying a new restaurant, book, or tv show that speaks to a life experience different from your own, and helps you learn about other perspectives. Or being intentional to approach any differences you encounter with curiosity rather than judgement.

Throughout these last four weeks together, we have learned a lot about what it means to see, listen, act, and care for one another – especially those who are different from us, or have been pushed aside. We've been challenged and encouraged to do our part to expand the kingdom of God and partner with creating God's vision for a united, diverse, and faithful community here on earth.

And while we are closing the sermon series, the work is not yet finished. Rather it we have just begun. Even the words in Revelation, the final book in the Bible, are not the end – because the

promised hope of God extends far beyond the bound pages of scripture. They reach into the words and work of prophets like Desmond Tutu. They reach into the small actions and curiosity of our children practicing faith. And they reach into the hands and heart of you, Messiah Church... and the good work you are doing each and every day.

No, we are not finished yet. But I can't wait to see where we're headed and the ways that God's kingdom will be revealed among us.

Let us pray:

Good and loving God, as we gather today as your people – unite and strengthen us as your people. Help us to appreciate and celebrate the rich diversity of your creation, as we partner to build your kingdom here on earth. As we go forth today, challenge, equip, and encourage us in our following of you and loving of our neighbor. Amen.

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of October 29, 2023

Weekly Prayer

God of all creation, thank you for making me in your image and calling me your beloved. Focus my attention, that I notice the beautiful diversity in everything, and everyone, you have made. Help me to celebrate it and be curious, that as I grow in my understanding and love of your created world, I grow also in love of you. Help me also to be brave and bold, standing always for justice and peace. Make me to see, act, respect, and love others as you have loved. Amen.

Monday, October 30

Scripture: Revelation 7:9-17

After this I looked, and there was a great crowd that no one could number. They were from every nation, tribe, people, and language. They were standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They wore white robes and held palm branches in their hands. They cried out with a loud voice:

“Victory belongs to our God
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

All the angels stood in a circle around the throne, and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell facedown before the throne and worshipped God, saying,

“Amen! Blessing and glory
and wisdom and thanksgiving
and honor and power and might
be to our God forever and always. Amen.”

Then one of the elders said to me, “Who are these people wearing white robes, and where did they come from?” I said to him, “Sir, you know.” Then he said to me, “These people have come out of great hardship. They have washed their robes and made them white in the Lamb's blood. This is the reason they are before God's throne. They worship him day and night in his temple, and the one seated on the throne will shelter them. They won't hunger or thirst anymore. No sun or scorching heat will beat down on them, because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them. He will lead them to the springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Observation

Revelation is a book written to a people in pain and persecution under the cruel reign of Emperor Domitian. It's written, not to be a "fortune telling" of the end times, as some suggest. Rather, it is written to speak truth to power and comfort people who are suffering. Our hope, even in the midst of any present struggle, is that God will have the final say. God's kingdom will be a place where we are united as one body, where we no longer hunger or thirst, where we do not die tragically, or endure any oppressions of our current world. Our promised hope is that God will be with us, and bring all of God's beloveds to a place of peace and unity. The passage today shares a glimpse of that vision.

Application

As you read this passage, what type of diversity do you see present in God's kingdom vision? As I read this, I picture a crowd gathered at a Presidential Inauguration, or at the 1985 Live Aid concert (*I'm too young to remember it but have seen the photos and movies!*). Do you remember the images of Freddie Mercury performing to a crowd so big, you cannot see its ending? This is the image I have as I read the passage today. A crowd as far as the eye can see, including people of every age, gender, and race. I imagine people of varying nationalities, abilities, political ideologies, and tax brackets coming together to join their collective voices in praise. What is bringing them together in unity? It is praise of our God, who "leads them to springs of life-giving water." How is this same God guiding you toward unity and nurturing you by the life-giving water?

Prayer

Holy and mighty God, you who set the stars in their courses, and who gave light and life to all people, I know you hear the cries of your people yet today, longing for life-giving water. Help me to be your hands and feet in this world, actively working to bring about your kingdom here on earth. Give me opportunities today to love you by loving those in need, Amen.

Tuesday, October 31

Scripture: 1 Samuel 28:7-20

Translation by Robert Alter, in his work [Ancient Israel: The Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings:](#)

"Saul said to his servants, "Seek me out a ghostwife, that I may go to her and inquire through her." And his servants said to him, "There is a ghostwife at Ein-Dor." Saul disguised himself and put on different clothes, and he went—he together with two men—and they came to the woman by night, and he said, "Conjure me, pray, a ghost, and summon up the one I say to you." The woman said to him, "Look, you yourself know that Saul cut off the ghosts and the familiar spirits from the land. Why do you entrap me to have me put to death?" Saul swore to her, saying, "As the LORD lives, no blame will befall you through this thing." And the woman said, "Whom shall I summon up for you?" He said, "Summon Samuel for me." When the woman saw Samuel, she screamed in a loud voice. The king said to her, "Do not fear. But what do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "A god do I see rising up from the earth." He said to her, "What does he look like?" She said, "An old man rises up, and he is wrapped in a cloak." Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed to the ground and did obeisance. Samuel said, "Why have you troubled me?" And Saul said, "I am in dire straits, the Philistines are fighting against me and God has turned away from me and no longer answers me, neither through prophets nor dreams, so I called to you to let me know what I should do." Samuel said, "Why do you ask me, when the LORD has turned away from you and become your foe? The LORD has done to you

as He spoke through me, and the LORD has torn the kingship from your hand and given it to your fellowman, to David. In as much as you did not heed the voice of the LORD and you did not carry out His burning wrath against Amalek, therefore has the LORD done this thing to you this day! And the LORD shall give Israel, together with you, into the hands of the Philistines. Tomorrow, you and your sons will be with me. The camp of Israel, too, shall the LORD give into the hand of the Philistines.” Saul flung himself full length on the ground, as he was very frightened by Samuel’s words. ~1 Samuel 28:7-20

Observation

Today is Halloween, so it seems fitting to enjoy a “spooky story” from scripture today. Saul seeks out “the witch of endor” to help him talk to Samuel, who has died. Though Saul himself has forbidden the conjuring of spirits, he is desperate for advice. This witch was unfamiliar with calling anyone back from the dead, so when Samuel appears she screams! Samuel gives Saul advice but ends with a halloween-worthy fright: “tomorrow you and your sons will be with me.” And it was true; the next day, Saul dies.

Application

Today we take a slight deviation from our theme for the week, to enjoy a “spooky story” -- and one I can almost guarantee you haven’t learned in Sunday School or heard preached on a Sunday morning! Saul has been troubled and feels abandoned by God. He takes matters into his own hands, looks for answers elsewhere. I wonder, how often do we find ourselves impatient when we wait for God to answer? How often are we tempted to create our own answers, or fall to temptation in listening to voices other than God’s? How might this story be different if Saul had waited on God’s wisdom to be revealed? Isn’t this something we’re all tempted to do – find our own way, rather than wait and rely on God. I wonder what worries or struggles you have today that require extra patience as you wait on God’s wisdom? And what surprising people might God use to reveal your next steps?

Prayer

God, give me patience and endurance today, that I might trust in you with my whole self. Give me wisdom to discern your voice, and courage to follow your word. Help me to stay focused on you, and forgive me when I fail. Amen.

Wednesday, November 1

Scripture: Romans 12: 3-8

Because of the grace that God gave me, I can say to each one of you: don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Instead, be reasonable since God has measured out a portion of faith to each one of you. We have many parts in one body, but the parts don’t all have the same function. In the same way, though there are many of us, we are one body in Christ, and individually we belong to each other. We have different gifts that are consistent with God’s grace that has been given to us. If your gift is prophecy, you should prophesy in proportion to your faith. If your gift is service, devote yourself to serving. If your gift is teaching, devote yourself to teaching. If your gift is encouragement, devote yourself to encouraging. The one giving should do it with no strings attached. The leader should lead with passion. The one showing mercy should be cheerful.

Observation

The whole of chapter 12, is a beautiful piece of scripture teaching us how to live, and love, as the body of Christ. In these verses, we’re reminded of the great variety of gifts that we share. One reason that God has created us in community, is so we can share, develop, and celebrate

our gifts with one another. Here, we're reminded that it is our duty to make use of the gifts God has given, and to receive the gifts of others.

Application

What are the gifts God has given you? Is it to teach, or to create, to sing, or to write? How do you share them with the body of Christ? And what gifts do you receive from others, experiencing them only because of the generosity of others? Take time today to thank God for the diversity present within and around us.

Prayer

Great and glorious God, thank you for trusting me with gifts of: _____. Help me to find opportunities to share these gifts with others. Thank you for the diversity present throughout your creation; may we find ways to celebrate and embrace the varied gifts of your beloveds. Amen.

Thursday, November 2

Scripture: Romans 12:9-21

Love should be shown without pretending. Hate evil, and hold on to what is good. Love each other like the members of your family. Be the best at showing honor to each other. Don't hesitate to be enthusiastic—be on fire in the Spirit as you serve the Lord! Be happy in your hope, stand your ground when you're in trouble, and devote yourselves to prayer. Contribute to the needs of God's people, and welcome strangers into your home. Bless people who harass you—bless and don't curse them. Be happy with those who are happy, and cry with those who are crying. Consider everyone as equal, and don't think that you're better than anyone else. Instead, associate with people who have no status. Don't think that you're so smart. Don't pay back anyone for their evil actions with evil actions, but show respect for what everyone else believes is good. If possible, to the best of your ability, live at peace with all people. Don't try to get revenge for yourselves, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath. It is written, *Revenge belongs to me; I will pay it back, says the Lord. Instead, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. By doing this, you will pile burning coals of fire upon his head.* Don't be defeated by evil, but defeat evil with good.

Observation

Living in faithful community is not easy. With our varied gifts, experiences, and ideas, any relationship or community is bound to experience disagreement. As Wesley reminded us, we are not called to *think* alike, but to love alike. This passage teaches us what it is to love one another. Among other things, it says: love is sincere, seeking goodness. It is hopeful, patient, and prayerful. Love practices hospitality.

Application

Let's practice a reading called "lectio divina". Read through the passage slowly. What word or phrase stood out to you? Meditate on that phrase. Read the passage again. What word or phrase stood out to you? Was it the same or different? Read it a third time. And again: what stands out? Perhaps these words or phrases can be comfort to a weary heart, guidance for your day, or encouragement in your loving. Write them down and carry them with you today.

Prayer

God of love, you are patient and kind, you are merciful and the definition of love. Guide me to be more loving today. Help me learn from you, revealing to me what is mine to do, and mine to learn. Amen.

Friday, November 3

Scripture: Luke 14:7-14

When Jesus noticed how the guests sought out the best seats at the table, he told them a parable. "When someone invites you to a wedding celebration, don't take your seat in the place of honor. Someone more highly regarded than you could have been invited by your host. The host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give your seat to this other person.' Embarrassed, you will take your seat in the least important place. Instead, when you receive an invitation, go and sit in the least important place. When your host approaches you, he will say, 'Friend, move up here to a better seat.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up." Then Jesus said to the person who had invited him, "When you host a lunch or dinner, don't invite your friends, your brothers and sisters, your relatives, or rich neighbors. If you do, they will invite you in return and that will be your reward. Instead, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. And you will be blessed because they can't repay you. Instead, you will be repaid when the just are resurrected."

Observation

Today Jesus is telling us a parable about a great banquet, a wedding feast. He challenges us, in planning this event, not to invite friends or colleagues, not to invite people of status – but instead, to invite those who cannot repay you: the poor, the marginalized, the forgotten.

Application

Again and again, Jesus invites us to extend the table, so that there is room for all people. How might you practice this today: can you smile and say hello, can you help, or consider someone who is "unlike" you and perhaps feels forgotten? How might you remind them that they are worthy and valued guests of honor at God's table?

Prayer

Holy Christ, you have set a table and invited me to your banquet feast. When I feel discouraged, remind me that you love and see *all of* me. And help me to live in such a way that my words and actions help make wide your table, inviting, seeing, and loving those around me. Amen.

Saturday, November 4

Scripture: Isaiah 43:9-13

All the nations are gathered together;
the peoples are assembled.

Which of them announced this?

Who predicted to us the past events?

Let them bring their witnesses as a defense;
let them hear and say, "It's true!"

You are my witnesses, says the LORD,
my servant, whom I chose,
so that you would know and believe me
and understand that I am the one.

Before me no god was formed;
after me there has been no other.

I, I am the LORD,
and there is no savior besides me.

I announced, I saved, I proclaimed,
not some stranger among you.
You are my witnesses, says the LORD,
and I am God.
From the dawn of time, I am the one.
No one can escape my power.
I act, and who can undo it?

Observation

We end the week near where we begin: “all nations are gathered together; the peoples are assembled” (v9). And again, the voices of the crowds bring praise to God. Who in turn, reminds us that our God is everlasting, strong, and faithful. And still, God chose *you* to be one with whom God partners to bring about the kingdom. “You are my witnesses, says the LORD, my servant, whom I chose, so that you would know and believe me and understand that I am the one” (v10).

Application

How incredible is it that *our God*, who created and redeemed the whole universe, chooses *you* to be God’s partner and witness? You get to know God’s love intimately, and you have been explicitly invited to share it with others. Can you feel the weight and power, the care and trust in this? Rest today, knowing that you are God’s beloved. God not only takes great delight in *you*, but thinks you are the perfect witness to God’s love in the world.

Prayer

God of all time, the magnitude of your power and love is beyond my understanding. And yet, you have chosen to love, redeem, and invite me to follow in the steps of your Son. Thank you, dear God. Amen.