

**Five Solas
For the Glory of God Alone
Revelation 19:1-10**

Today marks the last of ten Sundays in our series commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. I hope you have enjoyed this series and that you have learned as much as the elders have as we have studied the five solas, or, the five doctrinal positions that separate Protestant beliefs from Catholic beliefs. Sola is the Latin word for alone. We believe that Scripture alone – not what the Pope says, not what our hearts say, but Scripture alone – points to salvation in Christ alone as our only hope of salvation. We are saved by God’s grace alone through faith alone – not by good works on our part in any measure – and, our salvation is to the glory of God alone. Today is our second week to focus on the last of the five solas – Soli Deo Gloria, to the glory of God alone.

Last week, seven of our eight elders sat on a panel where they answered questions about God’s glory. This morning, you will have the opportunity to share what is on your heart with our congregation. Twice a year – at Thanksgiving and at Christmas – we take a portion of the sermon time to share testimonies, as we will do today, after an abbreviated sermon. Sort of, abbreviated. I would love to hear what you have learned through our time in the Five Solas Series, whether it concerns the extent of God’s grace or the exclusivity of Christ in our relationship with God or the blessed debt we owe to our Lord for his glorious salvation.

God’s glorious salvation. Do you feel that way about your relationship with the Lord because of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, where his blood became a propitiation for sin? Propi – what? Propitiation – or, the truth that Jesus’ blood satisfied the righteous and just wrath that God had toward sin, and, in fact, toward sinners. Jesus’ sacrifice is the way God remained just in

condemning sin while, at the same time, justifying sinners. Does that make sense to you? Hopefully it does if you have been here these last ten weeks. If not, perhaps today's text will help these audacious claims of Scripture to take shape.

Our text today is Revelation 19:1-10. It is one of many times, in Revelation, where angels and elders and redeemed men and women of every tongue and tribe break out in praise to God, saying over and over again, "Hallelujah," which comes from a Hebrew term meaning "Praise Yahweh." As we read the text, you may be surprised that those in heaven not only praise the Lord for his goodness, but they also glorify him because he has brought severe judgment against his enemies. It is the perspective of those who stand before the Lord as perfect men and women, not because of their own good works, but because of Jesus' sacrifice on their behalf and the righteousness that God declared to be true of them. Revelation 19:1-10 is our text, but I will only read five verses initially. It is our custom to stand for the reading of Scripture, so I will ask you to please stand.

1 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out,

"Hallelujah!

Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,

2 for his judgments are true and just;

for he has judged the great prostitute

**who corrupted the earth with her immorality,
and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."**

3 Once more they cried out,

"Hallelujah!

The smoke from her goes up forever and ever."

4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” 5 And from the throne came a voice saying,

**“Praise our God,
all you his servants,
you who fear him,
small and great.”**

Maybe one of the more compelling evidences that a good Creator God exists is the desire for justice in our hearts. When Charles Manson died last week, men and women found creative ways to publicly voice their sentiments, which tended toward happiness at his death. In these last weeks, many are understandably satisfied to see sexual predators being held accountable for disgusting abuses of power that demeaned others. There is something in us that cries out, “Justice!” Fortunately, there is a God who will bring justice for all. Unfortunately, there is a God who will bring justice *to* all.

As we have seen, repeatedly in Scripture, during this series, all sin will be judged by God, not just the sins we rightly deem reprehensible. Our only hope is that someone take the penalty of our sin, which is death, spiritual as well as physical. Spiritual death requires separation from God for all eternity. The good news that we learn in Scripture is that Jesus, God in the flesh, came to earth – fully human, fully God – and lived a perfect life, keeping God’s law in every point, something none of us could do. He thus became an eligible sacrifice for sin and when he died on the cross, God poured out the wrath that was directed toward us on Jesus. When we acknowledge our sin before God – or, we repent of our sin – and when we believe that Jesus died in our place, God counts our faith as righteousness. He declares that we are as righteous as Jesus – and it is so. No matter our past, when we hide behind the cross, we are found in Jesus, the only safe place.

Several of you have told me that you would like to know more about the book of Revelation. I have been thinking and praying about a way to teach through the book of Revelation, probably some time other than Sunday mornings. The elders will be thinking through ways we might get to this book. I must warn you, though, Revelation will challenge your assumptions about fairness at an uncomfortable level. If you think God's sense of justice is the same as yours, you are in for a slap in the face when you read Revelation. You will respond in one of two ways. Either you will walk away and say, "No more of that," or, you will say, "Thanks! I needed that." That's a bit of old-school humor that is likely not funny in our day, but it is nothing compared to what you will see in Revelation.

Let's quickly work through our text and bring ridiculously brief application so that we can get to the testimonies. Can you imagine the scene that is described in our text? Have you ever been at a concert or a ballgame where you could hardly hear yourself think, much less speak? This great multitude in Revelation 19 cries out "Hallelujah!" in praise of God. The men and women who stand before the throne of God no longer have sympathy for those who defy the Lord because they are now perfect, having been washed by the blood of the Lamb. They not only praise God for saving them, but they ascribe glory and power to God and give thanks that he has rightly judged those who refused his goodness and defiled themselves along with others in their sin. If, in your heart, you are thinking, "Who is anyone to judge others?", the answer will be "The true and just one who created us and redeemed a people for himself." This is not a popular sentiment in our day, but if you believe the Scripture to be God's word, then you have no choice but to land in this place. None of us is granted the choice to take what we want of Scripture and reject the rest. If you take God at his word, you may be greatly persecuted, and while you may pray,

**“Forgive them, Father, for they do not know what they are doing,”
one day you will praise him for his justice.**

In verse 6, the praise swells:

**6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like
the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of
thunder, crying out,**

“Hallelujah!

**For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.**

**7 Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;**

**8 it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure”—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.**

**Of all the metaphors for the church, such as the body of Christ, and
a temple, and a family, none is more intimate than our status as the
Bride of Christ. What does it mean? I don't know, fully, but it is
how the Lord sees us in Jesus. Notice in verse 8 that we did not
bring our own wedding clothes – it was granted that we wear the
perfect clothes for our marriage to the Lamb. Our wedding attire
will be provided for us, since we are incapable of clothing ourselves
in the required manner. If I truly believe this day will happen, I will
desire to live in a manner that pleases him, and such choices become
the righteous deeds of the saints. Again, not my goodness, but his
goodness in me. If you are, indeed, the bride of Christ, Grace
Community Church, why do you live as though you are not? Verse
9:**

9 And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” 10 Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

When you worship Jesus, you worship God, and if you worship God, you are called to worship in spirit and in truth. Amen. Before we participate in testimony and praise, I want to close with the concluding points made in the last book on the Sola Series that our elders used. David Vandrunen wrote the book titled *God’s Glory Alone*. He called the church to give glory to God in the face of enormous social and cultural pressure in the following three areas, although not directly stated as challenges. First:

1. Prayer and Worship in an Age of Distraction

I was going to say something about this, but I just need to check my phone and I will get right back with you. No phones, I am guessing, in the Revelation 19 scene. Second:

2. The Fear of the Lord in an Age of Narcissism

Guilty! Perhaps you and I would not be labeled narcissists in a classic personality disorder sense, but I bet we are all much closer to this than we want to admit. Maybe you can tell the difference in the technical sense when one moves from desperately needing others’ approval to demanding to having his or her own way with no regard for others. It is more than confidence – it is over-confidence. Last:

3. Glorifying God in an Age that is Passing

This is our calling, is it not? We are reminded every day that this world is passing, but we will live forever. Far better that we live in God's presence than to be separated from him for all eternity. And if we have believed God, our primary focus and drive in life should be to glorify him, though it is much easier said than done. Johann Sebastian Bach composed music as an offering to God. His heart led him to say, in effect, "When I write music, it is because God has given me a gift, so I give my very best effort." Whenever Bach would come to the last measure of his composition, he would sign his music in this way: Soli Deo Gloria.

And, now, it is your turn to give God praise. Our time is limited, so jump in early.