

Holy Forever

Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,' who was, and is, and is to come." Revelation 4:8

Holy! Holy! Holy!

Growing up, it was always the first song in our hymnal.

Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty!

And looking back on those early days at that small church in East Texas, it seems like we sang it every single Sunday.

Early in the morning, our song shall rise to Thee.

For my brothers and me, after a Saturday full of sports, it did feel pretty early in the morning. Even so, this song shaped us. It formed our imaginations and filled our spirits with true worship. This was not a song about us or anything we had done or were doing or would ever do. It was not a song about what God had done or could do or would do for us, good as those kinds of songs are. Though I didn't pay much attention to song lyrics in those early days, I somehow knew this one was different. Because it was the first song in the book, I considered it my own first song.

In that little church so long ago, we knew that when we were singing this song, we weren't thinking about our-selves at all. In fact, it felt like we weren't even in the building anymore. As the Holy Spirit tuned our voices, weaving them together in melody and harmony, He transported us through the skies, into the heavens and before the very throne of Almighty God.

Holy! Holy! Holy! Merciful and Mighty God in Three Persons Blessed Trinity

As we sang, we became lost to ourselves, our problems, our concerns, our brokenness, and even our blessings. And as we became lost to ourselves, we became found in God, on the inside of the holy community of the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. What a fellowship! What a joy divine! But that's another song, isn't it?

Holy! Holy! Holy!

Holy! It is the oldest song in the book because it's older than the book. It's the song of the angels and the archangels, of the elders and the living creatures. Holy! It's the song that transcends time—before the past and beyond the future. Holy! It's not the song of God's activity but of God's identity.

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This is where worship begins, not with what God has done but with who God is. Worship begins and ends with the sheer beauty, awe, and glory of God, becoming captured and enraptured by the greatness of God. Only one word can capture this, forever and ever: *Holy!*

Holy Forever!

Growing up, as I began to lead worship, people would ask what I planned to do for a living. I remember when I finally got the courage to say I hoped to become a full-time worship leader. Sometimes a well-meaning elder would say something like, "Son, don't become so heavenly minded that you are of no earthly good." While I nodded my head in respect, inwardly my heart grieved. Something in me knew that was wrong. I would cling to God's Word and to Scriptures like this one:

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Colossians 3:1-4

That seems to say the more heavenly minded you become, the more earthly good you will do. As we lift our hearts and set our minds on things above, we become caught up in the heavenly vision. Nothing is more needed on earth than the vision of heaven. And what is this vision? Thanks for asking.

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

"Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." Revelation 7:9-10

This is the worship of heaven that now rises up all over the earth. What could be more worthy of our lives than to join this on-earth-as-it-is-in-heaven movement? This is the worship-led life. The vision keeps going:

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying:

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" Revelation 7:11-12

Can you see the vision?

A thousand generations falling down in worship

To sing the song of ages to the Lamb
And all who've gone before us and all who will believe

Will sing the song of ages to the Lamb

Your name is the highest
Your name is the greatest
Your name stands above them all

All thrones and dominions
All powers and positions
Your name stands above them all

From my first song to my last, these songs of heaven are the shaping influence. In the days ahead we will dig a deep well into these eternal songs. We will remember and reflect, ponder and pray, journal and sing our way forward. As we walk together deeper into the presence of God, we will find ourselves becoming more of who we were made to be as His people. We will find the heavenly vision breaking forth into our lives on this earth as we grow to walk by faith and not by sight.

And the angels cry, Holy All creation cries, Holy You are lifted high, Holy Holy forever!

THE BRIDGE

“Day and night they never stop saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,’ who was, and is, and is to come.”

These words ring out at the center of all that is real as they are spoken before the throne of God. Begin to speak them aloud today, becoming aware that you are joining worship already in progress in heaven.

I want you to read and revel in Revelation 4 and 5. Then turn to Revelation 7:9–12. Become intimately familiar with these songs of heaven. Set up a campsite right in the middle of them.

SING WITH ME

Queue up the song “Holy Forever” from our playlist (www.christomlin.com/singwithme) and sing along with me. Pay attention to your posture—posture matters because it expresses the worship of our very bodies before God. You might want to come out of that comfortable chair and get into a kneeling or standing position.

HOW GREAT?

How have you perhaps misunderstood the word “Holy” in the past? How are you thinking about it now? What would it mean to have a holy imagination as it comes to seeing the greatness of God?