

Week of December 30-January 5

MELTING POT

Scripture Reading: Read Revelation Chapter 7

For almost two centuries in our country's history, it was common to refer to America as a melting pot. The phrase was used in reference to immigrants coming to America, learning English, and taking on the characteristics of the dominant culture. The expectation was that these immigrants would identify with their new country more than the native country from which they came. In essence, different backgrounds would melt together and be assimilated under the overarching identity as Americans.

Over the past fifty years, a new image has developed that contrasts with the melting pot perspective. Rather than melting everyone into a stew, some prefer to see America as a tossed salad filled with a variety of ingredients. Different cultures, rather than being subsumed into the dominant culture, are celebrated. Multilingual and multicultural expressions are encouraged rather than discouraged.

The debate over which of the images should be promoted has been ongoing ever since. Those who hold to the melting pot figure are convinced that multiculturalism separates us from one another and turns us into hyphenated Americans rather than just Americans. Those who hold to the salad image, or what is sometimes called a mosaic, stress that stripping people groups of their heritage robs folks of their history and their personhood. Recently, there have been attempts to synthesize the two positions and seek an integrated model that incorporates both images.

Such a model, however, has already been created. It's found in the book of Revelation! Notice what John has to say in verses 9-10 of today's chapter reading: *"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 in front of 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." This confirms what John heard and recorded in chapter 5: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."*

It is clear from these two passages that it's God's intention that representatives from every nation, tribe, people and language would worship him. A mosaic of worshippers is envisioned as each culture, each nationality, each people group is both affirmed and given the opportunity to glorify the King. This implies that no one culture or nationality has a lock on worship of God. Christianity is meant to be multicultural. Yet, it's also a melting pot, for each is called to worship the one true God through the one Lamb. Multiple cultures may worship but only one Savior is to be trusted and praised.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Make a point to join in worship with someone of a different nationality, language or ethnicity. Ask the Lord to enlarge your view of worship until it becomes both multicultural and a melting pot.

Take-a-way: *Multicultural and a melting pot – the church in worship of God!*