

**Worthy is the Lamb**  
(Sermon 12 – Rev. 5:1-14)  
12.8.24

Turn with me to Revelation, chapter 5.

If you were with us last Sunday, you know we covered chapter 4 and the vision John was given a vision of heaven, and specifically the throne of God Himself. Ch. 4 set the stage for the drama now to unfold in ch. 5, which directs our focus on the worship of the Son of God and His work of redemption.

Now, since worship is in view, before we dissect this text, I think that it is appropriate that we first relish it, enjoy it, and to worship together in God's word. Let's do that now as we read Rev. 5:1-14, and then we'll pray...

**(Rev. 5:1-14)**

***[5:1] Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. [2] And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" [3] And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, [4] and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. [5] And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." [6] And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. [7] And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. [8] And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. [9] And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, [10] and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."***

**[11] Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, [12] saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” [13] And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” [14] And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.**

**(Let’s Pray)**

Here’s what Bible scholar and teacher Robert Mounce says about our text today...

*“Nowhere else in the literature of worship will one find a scene of such unrestrained praise and adoration....[this chapter] has revealed a central truth that governs the entire book of Revelation. By his sacrificial death the Lamb has taken control of the course of history and guaranteed its future.” ~ Robert Mounce*

As you read the Book of Revelation, and especially as we dive into the strange and sometimes confusing symbolism, we need to remind ourselves what this Book is all about. It is about Jesus. And chapter 5 is no exception. In fact, here is the main thought of the message today:

***PROP: All of history and all of eternity revolve around the redeeming power of our Savior.***

Now, as this heavenly drama unfolds before us, we can see three scenes, like three acts in a play. The first act is...

**1. “THE SCROLL”**

**(v. 1-4)**

***[5:1] Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.***

Now, what is this scroll, and why is it significant?

-God the Father is holding it in His right hand, signifying God's justice.  
-The scroll has writing on both sides, front and back. Normally you only wrote on one side of a papyrus. Only two reasons you would use both sides:

1. Too poor to buy another scroll (that's not God's issue)
2. You want all of the document to be in one scroll, not separated.

This writing on both sides of the scroll illustrates God's complete, unified and perfect will coming to pass. All of God's purposes of judgment and blessing, it all goes together. So, we know from the coming chapters that this scroll contains God's purposes of redemption and judgment.

-Now why is it sealed? In biblical times, the two-sided legal scrolls were rolled up, and an extra sheet covered the outside, with a summary, and sealed with wax. This would ensure that only the intended party could open it and read its contents.

For that legal document to be acted upon, the seals must be broken and its contents declared. And John tells us this scroll is sealed with not one but 7 seals, a sign of the perfection of God's will, and a demand for perfection for the one who opens it.

***[2] And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"***

Why was no one worthy to open it? Think about it this way. If you have prepared a will, (and every adult in here should), one of the things you have to decide is who will be the executor of your estate – the person in charge of being sure everything is done according to your wishes, the one in charge of executing – or carrying out – all that you intend.

When you choose an executor for your will, you should be sure they are trustworthy, that they are honest, that they are a person of integrity...and that they love you enough to face even the harshest criticisms and even rejection by your family members to be sure that the will is executed as you intended.

This scroll in Rev. 5 is the recorded will of God's redemptive plan – both His blessings and His judgments to come. And since this belongs to the Holy God of the universe, the Almighty, perfect in all His ways, the person who opens it must be equally as holy.

No one in creation fits that standard. No one is as holy as God, as worthy as God.

And not only is there a requirement of perfect character, but also of perfect power. For the one who opens this scroll of God's redemptive will, of his perfect plan for all time for all creation, that person would have to have the power to carry out this plan - both in the blessing of God's people and the judgment of those who rejected God.

Perfect character. Perfect power.

So the question is posed of all creation, by the booming voice of the archangel, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?", followed by a long pause, and a deafening silence.

***[3] And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, [4] and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.***

One of the few times in Scripture you see someone weeping in heaven. Why was John weeping?

Because in that moment, it was revealed that no one in all creation had the perfect character and the perfect power to open the scroll of God's will. If no one came forward, God's will would not be fulfilled.

John weeps, because within the symbolism of the vision, this means that God's purposes will not be brought to pass. If Christians are suffering, and God's will cannot be completed, then there's no point to it, no justice will be done, and life ultimately has no meaning. In a word, it's hopeless.

I'm sure most of us in here have experienced the feeling of hopelessness, to feel like things are so bad, there's no way they can get better. That's a scary place. That is a dark place. But notice I said the "feeling" of hopelessness. Because if you have Christ, there is no such thing as hopelessness.

The Psalmist tells us, "We may sow in tears, but we will reap with shouts of joy". We will endure heartache, we will suffer, we will come face-to-face with this broken world and these broken bodies, but we belong to the one who makes all things new. We will grieve, but we do not grieve as those who have no hope. Jesus IS hope. Jesus is OUR hope. To have Christ IS to have hope.

- When a loved one dies, Jesus is our hope.
- When we lose our job, Jesus is our hope.
- When we are staring down that terminal illness, Jesus is our hope.
- When we are discouraged at the slowness of our own sanctification, Jesus is our hope.

To have Christ is to have hope!

But to be without Christ is to be without hope. And that's what we are meant to see here in these verses. The scroll is important. It's the visual of God's judgment to come. But the scroll itself is not the focus. The real focus is on the one worthy to open the scroll.

And that is who John now sees. Act 2 in our heavenly drama...

## 2. "THE LION & THE LAMB" (v. 5-7)

***[5] And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."***

John's weeping is interrupted by one of the 24 heavenly elders or archangels, lifting John's gaze to see the very embodiment of hope itself, which this angel describes first as a lion, the "Lion of the tribe of Judah".

This comes from Genesis 49, when Jacob is giving a final blessing to his sons, and he calls his son Judah "a lion's cub". Part of OT prophecy foretold that the Messiah would be descended from the tribe of Judah. In his earthly heritage, Jesus descends from that line.

But Jesus is no cub. He is the Lion. He is the King who has conquered, and who rules over all creation, with all authority. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

The other description the angel gives Jesus is the Root of David. David is the OT mascot, the earthly king who served as the placeholder for the eternal king of Israel, and all of God's people.

But David was just a man. He died. In that way, he was cut down, as all men are. But Jesus is the root of that tree – as very God of very God, Jesus came before David in eternity. As God made flesh, Jesus came after David in human history. Therefore, He is both the root and the shoot of the

lineage of David, the promised ruler, the first and the last, whose rule would have no end. That's who the angel is describing to John.

***[6] And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.***

Here the suspense builds. We've gone from no one worthy to open the scroll of the judgment and blessings of God, to now a figure has come forward who is worthy.

Notice first where this figure is – He between the throne and the other heavenly beings. No one is closer to God's throne than Jesus. This nearness reminds us of Jesus' authority, and power... and deity. He is not only the *Son* of God. He IS God, worthy of worship.

And John describes this figure as a Lamb, standing, and with the appearance of one having been slain:

-This lamb had 7 horns, which is the standard symbol for a king or kingdom, 7 symbolizing perfection, or the perfect reign of Christ.

-Along with that, there were 7 eyes on this Lamb, representing perfect knowledge, omniscient, seeing all.

-And the 7 spirits of God, likely refers to the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus sent to comfort His Church.

Wait a minute. Didn't the angel call him a Lion, and now John sees a Lamb? Is this a different person? No. Verse 6 should not be a new paragraph. These are not two figures, but one in the same. The Lion is the Lamb. The Lamb is the Lion.

Now, you don't get more different, more opposite pictures than a fierce lion and a bleeding lamb. But that's how Jesus is depicted. And that description, while hard to visualize, is perfect. It perfectly describes Jesus:

The Lion, the monarch, the conquering king who rules over all, He conquered by becoming a sacrificial Lamb. The one with all power and authority willingly submitted Himself to be murdered. That word "slain" actually means "to be slaughtered". He was butchered. Jesus willingly, lovingly laid down His life as payment for my sin and your sin.

His perfect righteousness given to us in exchange for our filthy rags. His perfect innocence poured out for our undeniable and complete sinfulness. In the most miraculous display of mercy ever revealed, the Perfect died for the wicked. And through faith in the Perfect One, all of our sins and imperfections are washed away.

So John sees a ruling, powerful, conquering Lion who conquered **by becoming** a slaughtered Lamb, sacrificed at the Cross.

And what did this Lion/Lamb, standing in the midst of God's throne do next? While all of heaven is frozen in silent suspense, wondering if anyone is worthy to take the scroll, John sees this mysterious figure do something amazing...

***[7] And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.***

All hope is not lost. God's redemptive plan would be fulfilled. There is one worthy to open the scroll. And He is none other than Jesus Christ – the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. The Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world. He is worthy! He is victorious! And He has stepped forward and rescued His people!

What a glorious picture of Jesus as our Mediator - the one who stands before the throne on our behalf. The one who not only reveals the truth of the gospel, but is the very embodiment of the gospel. Jesus not only preached the good news of salvation, but went to the cross and secured our salvation.

And THAT's why Jesus is worthy. THAT's why He can take the scroll when no one else could, because He did what no one else could. He alone was worthy to take the scroll, to be the one who not only reveals God's will, but also to be the one who enacts God's judgments and blessings to come.

Jesus not only revealed the remedy for our sin. He is the remedy. He is the plan. He is Redemption. God Himself, the Savior of sinners.

(Transition): How does one respond to that? What is the appropriate response to that kind of mind-blowing mercy and love? The answer is worship. Full, unrestrained, complete worship.

That's what we see in the final Act of chapter five's heavenly play, with all of heaven singing...

<b>3. "THE NEW SONG" (v. 8-14)</b>
------------------------------------

***[8] And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. [9] And they sang a new song...***

The heavenly creatures and elders around God's throne fall down in submission and adoration and worship of the Lamb, of Jesus Christ. And John says they're holding harps and golden bowls full of incense.

The harp was an instrument of celebration, of praise unto God. So this picture of these angelic beings playing harps tells us they were worshiping and celebrating Jesus.

They also held golden bowls full of incense, which the Bible says are the prayers of the saints. God is describing the prayers of His people as a sweet fragrance to Him. When you pray in those still moments, when your heart is filled with worship and song, your prayers and your worship are the perfume of heaven.

And along with their harps and bowls, the four living creatures and 24 elders begin to sing "a new song". Why is it called a "new song"? Our friend Robert Mounce again...

*"The song to the Lamb is a new song because the covenant established through his death is a new covenant. It is not simply new in point of time, but more important, it is new and distinctive in quality." – Robert Mounce*

This is a new song in response to a new blessing from God – the Lion has conquered because the Lamb has been slain to bring about redemption through His own blood.

Jesus came to earth as a man, the Son of God, dying for us, returning to His throne in heaven to take His rightful place, and now we are peering into the future when God's final judgments and blessings will be handed out. And Jesus is at the center of it all. Because of His redemptive work,



this scroll will not only include judgment on the sinner, but rewards and blessings for those whom Jesus' blood has redeemed.

So, the creatures and elders surrounding God's throne sang a new song of worship to Jesus. And what were the lyrics of this song?

***[9] And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, [10] and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."***

These beings closest to the throne, the ones charged with the honorable duty to eternally sing God's praises without end, they put into song lyrics the powerful, beautiful truth. Not only do they state with theological accuracy who Christ is and what He has done as our Redeemer, but they celebrate it. They declare that He is worthy, then they rejoice in His worth.

Stop for a moment and recognize what God is showing us in His word: the beautiful picture of worship in Heaven that is not only true, but it is passionate. This message could have been spoken. It could have been announced by an angel.

But instead, it is sung. It is a song sung by those who do not have minds clouded with the desires and distractions of this world. They proclaim the truth and rejoice in the truth that Jesus is Lord, that He has fulfilled the plan of redemption, saving people of every skin color and country. And not only has he saved His people, but He has transformed us from sinner into saint, from prisoner to priest, from outcast to children of the king.

That's who you are! And it's all because of Jesus! And that's worth celebrating! The one who is worthy of all worship and praise and glory is the one who saved you, who loves you, who found you and forgave you and made you His own.

You cannot think on those truths for long and remain silent. You can't grasp any part of that truth and remain unmoved. Praise will come, not just as polite thoughts in your head, but as jubilant praise out of your mouth.

This kind of praise is contagious. And we see that here in these verses. A song that starts with the inner circle around the throne, expands to all of heaven...

***[11] Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, [12] saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"***

As the heavenly beings surrounding the throne sing a new song of worship to Jesus, every voice in heaven, with angels numbering far beyond John's ability to count, all declare the matchless worth of our Savior.

We could end there, with all of heaven declaring the worth and majesty of Jesus. But this new song is not contained to heaven. All of creation had to join in...

***[13] And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"***

Every voice, all creation, all of the universe declaring the glory of God in Christ. They are not only singing of the past work of redemption on the cross, but also of the future redemption that is to come, that is contained in this scroll Jesus is about to open.

And notice, they don't wait for it to be read, for it to be enacted and proven. But here in John's vision all of creation jumps at the chance to sing and rejoice for the fulfillment of the total and full redemption in Christ.

They know the destruction of sin and the intrusion of death will soon be perfectly and forever replaced with the perfect order and peace and joy in the God who created us, and the Savior who redeemed us.

Now, how do you respond to *that*, when all of that truth is revealed and sung and celebrated? The only thing you can say – "Amen!"

***[14] And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.***

We end where we began – with the four living creatures surrounding God's throne. Their contagious praises echoing through heaven, through

creation, now come right back, and they add their “Amen!”, their agreement to the truth being proclaimed, and they fell down and worshiped.

### **Conclusion**

We have been given the great honor to behold amazing things in the pages of Scripture. We’ve beheld the throne of God. We’ve seen the angelic creatures around the throne worshiping God. We’ve been shown the majesty and beauty of heaven itself.

But more than any of these amazing sights and sounds, we have had revealed to us the one that all of this revolves around. We have seen Jesus. Remember: ***All of history and all of eternity revolve around the redeeming power of our Savior.***

This vision of heaven and of Jesus himself surely makes us homesick, it makes us long for heaven.

But there’s a more immediate purpose for these verses for us to consider: Jesus wants you to see Him so that you and I will trust Him now, will worship Him now, and will become more like Him day by day.

If everything in the Bible – OT and NT point to Jesus – and it does, then you can be confident that everything you’ve gone through in your life, and anything you will ever go through – is for the purpose of pointing you to Jesus.

Jesus is the Lion who has conquered, so you can rest assured He knows how to protect you. Jesus is the Lamb who was slain, so you can have faith to know that your sins are forgiven.

See Him today. Live for Him today. Only in Christ is there purpose and meaning. In Christ, there is a plan for your life, and that plan will culminate to achieve the highest good for you, and the greatest glory to God.

So keep your hearts anchored in Jesus. Keep your eyes on Jesus. And may the lyrics of the heavenly chorus echo in our hearts: ***“Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered...”***

***(Let’s Pray)***