

Offering/Advent Testimony (Pete and Bev Broderick)

These past 6 weeks we have been teaching through this idea of 3-Dimensional worship; we've been talking about how our entire life can be an act of worship. But in all our talk about worship is or isn't, it is so important that we keep in mind the reason why we worship. This morning, I want to keep my teaching as simple as possible: *we worship God, because He is worthy.*

If any other person on the face of this planet asked me to surrender all of my hopes, dreams, and plans and to follow where they lead; I would tell them to buzz off. If any other person asked me to open my wallet and to give regularly and generously to whomever and whatever they determined best...I would probably laugh it off and book a trip to Hawaii. If any other person told me that I was to live the entirety of my life for their sake; I would chalk up the request to them having the world's biggest ego.

But when God asks this of me (and He does), increasingly, I find myself wanting to say "yes." Why? Because He is worthy. So great is the worthiness of God that even if we possessed the entire Cosmos and gave it as a gift to God, that gift would be too small. God is worthy of our lives, our whole life, and so much more. So there's my sermon in a sentence: **God is worthy of our worship.**

As we camp down on this idea, I want to direct your attention to Revelation 4 and 5. Here we come face to face with the glory of God, the splendour of heaven, and we encounter a heavenly community in full-scale worship. I want to invite you to listen in on what is going on, and invite you to see what they saw; the visions of Revelation 4 and 5 reveal the worthiness of God.

And so this morning, I am going to take the time to read both chapters out loud, and I want to invite you to follow along on the screen. Throughout these two chapters we will encounter 5 different worship songs, and as we get to these songs, I want to invite you to read these words out loud with me.

Revelation 4

1 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." 2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. 3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne.

4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. 5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. 6 Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. 8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

Revelation 5

1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” 3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. 5 Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 8 And

when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people.

9 And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

12 In a loud voice they were saying: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” 14 The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Allow me to state the obvious: there is a big difference between reading a description of this vision, and seeing it firsthand. When we read it, we can get so lost in the peculiar details, that we lose sight of the big picture. We can spend so much time trying to dissect the meaning of the precious stones, the golden crowns, or the identity of the creatures and the elders. When all along, all that John saw was

intended to communicate the greatness, the majesty, and the worthiness of God.¹

Three times we hear this thunderous refrain: “[You are worthy...to receive glory](#)”, “[You are worthy to take the scroll](#)”, and finally, “[Worthy is the Lamb who was slain](#)”.² Brothers and sisters, I want to invite you to press into worship this morning. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, give us a vision of your worthiness that will change the way we see, the way we think, and feel, and act in your world. God’s Word is living and active, so too is the Holy Spirit...may both Word and Spirit mark and pierce us this morning.

Revelation 4 and 5 make it clear that God is worthy of worship; this morning let’s consider together why this is so. First, God is worthy because:

1. He is a Sovereign King:

In Revelation 4, we’re told that God opened a door in heaven, and invited John to see and hear what God would do next. And we’re told that with John’s first glance into heaven, what he saw was a throne with someone seated on it.

Now if I were to take a seat here on the stage, you might assume that I’m tired, weary, or injured. The question is, why does John mention that the Lord is seated on the throne? Is God tired, weary, or injured? No...God has taken His rightful place as King; He is seated in the place of all authority and power because He is both God and King.

The fact that God is seated is very good news. God being seated communicates two opposite, but complimentary truths: (a) *First, God is seated because He is at work*, His court is in session...God is attentive to all that is going on; and (b) *Second, God is seated because He is at rest*. He is seated on His throne because there is no threat to His rule. He has enemies, but none that can displace Him, none that can bring Him harm, none that can derail His plans and purposes for us or for the rest of creation.

This was good news for those first Christians for they lived in the shadow of the Roman Empire. Everywhere they walked they saw signs that Caesar was king, that he was seated on the throne, with the power to harass, persecute, and take their lives if he so chose. This vision reminded them that even Caesar was subject to God.

If we let it, this vision of God on His throne can put the world, and our own personal lives back into perspective. Because God is seated on His throne, we don’t need to live with a spirit of fear; because He is at work, we can find rest in Him.

When the world has gone mad and runs about wildly, crying, “*The sky is falling, the sky is falling!*”, our worship becomes an act of defiance. We resolutely stand and declare, “*The world is not a lost cause, it is not without purpose and meaning, it is not spinning madly out of control, because there is One who is seated on the throne.*”

¹ Craig S. Keener, *NIV Application: Revelation*, 176-177.

² Rev. 4:11; Rev. 5:9; Rev. 5:12.

Psalm 93:1-2 says, “*The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed in majesty and armed with strength; indeed, the world is established, firm and secure. 2 Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity*”.

Our job status might be unstable, our relationships broken, our emotions brittle, our health questionable, but in and through all of these realities, God is seated on His throne. In this very moment, He is at work for us, in us, around us, and through us. In this very moment, He invites us into His rest. In this very moment His attention is upon you. Revelation 5:8 tells us that so precious are our prayers to Him that He gathers them up in bowls so that He might pour out His answers at just the right time. So don't give up hope!

He is worthy of worship because He is seated on the throne; we can trust Him with our lives. And second, God is worthy because:

2. He is Holy, Holy, Holy

Day and night the four living creatures never stop saying, “*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.*” Eugene Peterson suggests that these four creature represent the various aspects of creation: the noblest (lion), the strongest (ox), the wisest (human), and the swiftest (eagle). In the vision, these creatures function as worship leaders: they gather around God, and as they gaze at His worthiness, they sing out in praise, and invite others to join them.³

³ Eugene Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*, 61-62.

⁴ Peterson, 63.

As the Holy One, God is perfect, He is pure, He is beautiful, He is true, He is trustworthy, His character is like the purest of gold. There is no one like God, no one who even comes close. And even before we get to this first worship song, John gives us a metaphorical hint of what is coming.

In Revelation 4:3, John can only describe the appearance of God by comparison to stunning, precious stones. Stones that Peterson notes are precious because they collect and intensify light.⁴ 1 John 1:5 says, “**God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.**” God is worthy of worship and we need to take our cues from those creatures who even now, see Him most clearly.

Illus: By a show of hands, how many of you soaked in the 2010 Olympic experience by walking the streets of Vancouver? My family and I took the Sea Bus over a few times and walked around with tens of thousands of people. But as you may have noticed, I haven't been blessed with colossal height. There were times when we stopped to take in a show, and I found myself at the back of the crowd, unable to see all that was going on.

While the crowd “oohed” and “aahed” from up front, I caught enough partial glimpses that had me cheering, clapping my hands, and feeling a sense of pride to be Canadian. And even when I couldn't see, I would take my cues from those up front who could see most clearly; when they cheered, I cheered.

It strikes me, as I meditate on these visions from Revelation, that we need to take our worship cues from John and these four living creatures. The Bible tells us that when it comes to God, at present, we only know and see Him in part. The day is coming when we shall see God as He is, but until that day we need to take our cues from those who have an unobstructed view. Those gathered around God's throne are not half-hearted or shy about their worship; what they see compels them to fall on their faces.

Third, God is worthy because:

3. He is both Creator and Sustainer

As the 4 worship leaders cry out "*Holy*," we're told the 24 elders fall down before God, lay their crowns before Him and sing, "*You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things and by your will they were created and have their being.*"

God is worthy because He is the Creator of all things. Every last bit of beauty and goodness we experience in life is a reflection of His beauty and goodness. Think about a baby's first smile, the sun setting over the mountains, the heat of a warm summer's day, a bite of Orange Creamsicle Ice Cream, scoring a glorious goal in soccer, or watching a magnificently performed dance, or gazing at a brilliant painting, or hearing someone tell you that you are loved...God has created all of these things.

Some times people will ask the question, "*If God is so loving, then why is there so much much evil and pain in the world?*" Friends, we

could just as easily ask, "*If there is no God, then why is the world filled with so much beauty and goodness?*" I think it takes more faith to believe that the beauty we encounter is unplanned, random, and meaningless than it does to believe in the One who created and sustains it all.

God is not an absent Father who created everything and then went on permanent vacation. God is both Creator and Sustainer. Colossians 1:16-17 tells us that "*all things were created by Him and for Him...and in Him all things hold together.*" God is worthy of our worship because He has breathed life into us...we owe our very existence to Him. But there is more.

In Him all things hold together: in Him, everyone and everything finds their reason for being, their purpose, their wholeness. Who better to tell us who we are than the One who created us? Who better to tell us our purpose in life than the One who created us for purpose? Who better to bring us to place of wholeness and peace than the One who is described as the Prince of Peace?

We find life, and purpose, and being, and meaning wrapped up in God our Creator. And because He has created us with such deep love, because He has made us for dignity and honour, because He has given to us so freely...we worship.

In Revelation 4:10, John described a scene where the throne of God was encircled by lesser thrones, and upon these thrones were seated 24 elders. And as the 4 creatures called the elders to worship, they gladly rose from their thrones, fell on their faces and laid their crowns before God .

They didn't revel in their own accomplishments or glory. They didn't pause to admire their crowns in the mirror. They were caught up in the worthiness of God. Everything they were, everything they had was a gracious gift from their Creator and they laid it all before Him.

Worship is costly, but not in the way we might think. Worship might cost us our pride, but it does not cost us our dignity. Worship calls us to recognize the worthiness of God, but the moment we do, we find our lives, we do not lose them. In His presence, we find our purpose; in His presence, we recognize that His glorious image is stamped upon our own lives. Worship costs us our pride, but it restores our dignity.

Finally, God is worthy because:

4. He is a Redeemer

Every good Jew would be comfortable with the conclusion of Revelation 4: God is worthy of worship because He is seated on the throne, He is Holy, and He is the Creator of all things. But that is not where John's vision leaves us; it continues and in Revelation 5 we find there is another person worthy of worship.

John looked again, and there, in God's right hand was an unopened scroll; the scroll represents God's future plans to bring history to its His desired conclusion. And the call went out to the the entire universe: *who is worthy to unveil the plans of God, and bring them to*

pass? Sadly, in all of creation, no one was found who was worthy, and John began to weep. Would God's plans be frustrated forever?

But then one of the elders said to John, "*Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah...has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll*". And with great expectation John looked again, expecting to see heaven's champion, expecting a noble and mighty Lion, but behold, he "*saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne*".⁵

Heaven's champion, God the Son, Jesus, conquered sin, death, and the devil through His own death and resurrection. And while Jesus is worthy of worship simply because He is God the Son, here in Revelation 5, He is declared worthy because He died to free us from sin's enslaving power.

The One who Created us, sent His Son to Redeem us. When the biblical writers used the word "redeem," they weren't using a religious word; it was a business word. To "redeem" was to pay off a debt, to pay a ransom that was owed.

Jesus payed our ransom, He purchased people for God; His death was the payment. He died in our place, His blood was shed for the forgiveness of our sin and rebellion against God. *This is how we know what love is, Jesus Christ laid down His life for us.*⁶

⁵ Revelation 5:6.

⁶ 1 John 3:16.

John tells us that the moment the Lamb took the scroll, all heaven erupted in a new song, “*You are worthy to take the scroll...Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!*” God is worthy of our worship because at the cost of His own life, He came to buy us back and invite us into His family.

He is worthy of all that we are and have. And ultimately what pleases God is not the melody of our voice but the posture of our heart in every act of worship offered. What we do does matter, but God is always seeking our heart. God has no need of anything and yet Augustine had it right when he wrote, “*God thirsts to be thirsted after.*” Richard Foster writes, “Our God is not made of stone. His heart is the most sensitive and tender of all. No act goes unnoticed, no matter how insignificant.”⁷

He is worthy of worship. Now, “*To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!*” Amen.

⁷ Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, 85.