

# “The Christian Story: For And From Every Nation”

**Text: Revelation 5:1-10 & 7:9-10 Sub-texts: Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:27**

**Missions Month Series: “The Christian Story Expresses Itself Uniquely In All Cultures: Learning From the Stories of our Indigenous Friends”**

**Rev. Dave Sattler January 26, 2020 North Shore Alliance Church**

**Sources:** Bible Gateway, NIV Life Application Bible, YouVersion App. Commentaries: Gordon Fee, Darrell Johnson, Craig Keener, & Leon Morris. Books: “*Raised Somewhere Else*” by Colleen Cardinal (2018), “*From Every Tribe And Nation*” by Mark Noll (2014), “*Reversed Thunder*” by Eugene Peterson (1988), “*A Knock on the Door*” by TRC (2015). Wikipedia: “*The Indian Act*” & “*Microaggression.*” Sermons: Interview with Brian Lysack (NSAC, 01/05/2020), “God Of The First Nations” by Dr Jen Singh (NSAC, 01/19/2020), Rikk Watts (REFRAME, Episode 5, “*Jesus the King,*” Regent). Documentary: “*Learning From The Stories Of Our Indigenous Friends*” (Elliot Harada, 2020). Meetings: Rahel Grunder (NSAC Staff, 01/23/2020), Dakota Hall (Brazza, 01/21/2020).

## I. Review & Introduction

- Good morning, everyone. I’m Dave Sattler, one of the pastors here at NSAC.
- <Slide> First, we acknowledge that we gather here, in God’s country, for the earth, and everything in it, belongs to Him. And we also acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional unceded territories of the Squamish Nation — a people group, rich in history, language, and culture, long living here in this most beautiful part of Turtle Island, Canada — God’s Country.
- <Slide> We’re wrapping up our Series, “Learning From The Stories Of Our Indigenous Friends.” Many have expressed appreciation for the topic this Missions Month as it’s provided a venue for some important processing.
- Youth and young adults in our church community, I know it is difficult ... to reconcile the Christian faith you’re growing up with, and are rightfully exploring the merits of, with the messages bombarding you at school.
- For, Western Christianity carries with it some heavy baggage: spiritual abuse in the name of Christian mission, power-wielding through colonialism, and cultural genocide, just to name some of it.
- So, we’ve been attempting to put some of these historical actions of the Christian Church in our country ‘under the microscope’ of God’s Word, which I believe, suggests rather clearly that “**The Christian Story [Actually] Expresses Itself Uniquely In All Cultures.**”
- At the launch of Canada’s Truth & Reconciliation Commission,
  - <Slide> Then Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued this apology, in the House of Commons, on June 11, 2008:
    - ☐ Q: “The objectives of the Indian Residential Schools were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, ‘to kill the Indian in the child.’ Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.”
    - “*A Knock On the Door*” (TRC, 2015), p.125-6.

- **<Slide>** ILL — Yet we have our heads in the sand if we think ...
  - Racism, “subtle” (L.T.) or otherwise, doesn’t still exist, in some form, in our country. Our mini-documentary bore that out.
  - This week, I sat down with a young Indigenous man from our church community, and he shared with me a dark story.
  - Just last Sunday, he was walking home from work on Lonsdale.
  - And a gentleman confronted him, yelling obscenities, and shouting, Q: ‘Get back on reserve, you dirty F’n Indian!’
  - Sadly, my Indigenous friend told me,
    - ☐ Q: ‘This is something I’ve had to deal with all my life.’
- **<Slide>** So we come today to Revelation Ch.5.
- Please turn there now or fire it up on your electronic device. It’s pg.1918 or pg.994 or pg.863 in the Bibles found in the seat rack in front of you.
- But, first a little context to set the stage.
- Life-long Jew, friend of Jesus [part of our Lord’s SLT], long-time pastor, now, because of his leadership in a movement considered a threat to the Roman Empire, John the Apostle finds himself ... exiled to the prison island of Patmos, off the west coast of modern-day Turkey. Cut off from the rest of the world, and, from his beloved congregation.
- Here John receives from God a number of vivid and wild visions.
- And he writes what he sees in the form of apocalyptic literature.
- Revelation, glimpses into the future meant to encourage Christ-followers to radical obedience in Jesus, in the present, as persecution mounts.

### **Revelation 5:1-10 & 7:9-10 (NIV, Bible Gateway)**

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 centre 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.”

- And scroll over to Ch 7. Let’s stand for this part and read together ...

<Slide> 7 9 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. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

- <PRAY> ‘Lord, move me out of the way. Come, speak to us by Your Spirit. Open our hearts to what You have for us. We’re hungry to hear from You.’

## II. Text Outline

### 1. <Slide> Who Is Worthy? (5:1-4)

- God’s justice is a primary theme of the Book of Revelation.
- In Ch.5, the Apostle John is witness to a future scene in heaven’s “throne” (1) room — the ‘Eternal Courtroom,’ if you will, where all cosmic affairs are to be settled. Jesus is there, though, at first His presence is hidden from view (1).
- All humanity is on trial before their Creator in this epic drama.
- And a “mighty angel” proclaims, “Who is worthy to open the scroll?” ‘And atone for humanity?’ (2) And, John ‘weeps and weeps’ (4), for at first scan, “no one” in the Room (3) is qualified. For John knows, that before God, no woman or man can ever stand alone, on their own merits.

### 2. <Slide> The Lion Is A Lamb (5:5-8)

- An ‘elder’ speaks up with the Good News, ‘No need to weep, John; “the Lion of Judah ... has triumphed” and He will “take the scroll” (5).
- I love the upside-down nature of the Christian Story.
- When John takes a look-see ... that Lion ... is a Lamb!
- And a “slain” Lamb, at that! Whose cross-wounds are still visible. God does not triumph wielding the power of a Lion, but with the sacrifice of a Lamb.
- And this Lamb has become the “centre” (6) of everything. He’s Jesus, God the Son, Whose perfect sacrifice on the cross covers all of our sins.
- And, this Jesus is the Only One Worthy to represent, defend, and save humanity. This is why the faithful ‘fall down’ and worship the Lamb (8).

### 3. <Slide> Salvation For Every Nation (5:9b-10)

- For with His shed blood, Jesus “purchased for God .... persons from every tribe and language and people and nation” (9). Redemption for all.

- Significant, this phrase appears in similar form 7 times in Revelation, “every tribe and language and people and nation.”
- The idea that God’s invitation of **salvation** through His Son Jesus is not limited to a specific culture, race, or nation, but extends to all, would have been challenging for the Apostle John, a lifelong Jew.
- What we’re really seeing here is the fulfillment, in eternity,
  - Of God’s ancient covenant promise. In Genesis 12, God says to
    - ☐ Abram, Q: “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great.” But it doesn’t end there. God continues, “And you will be a blessing ... and **all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.**” — Cf. Gen.12:1-3
    - ☐ Here’s the thing: God chose Israel so that, through Israel, from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, God through Jesus the Son, could bless the entire world.
    - ☐ And, rescue, bring, gather ... all nations back to Himself.
- **<Slide>** APP — Truth is: no culture has a permanent claim on the Gospel.
  - Multiculturalism is not just a fad or the invention of theological or political ‘liberals.’ It’s wired right into the Christian Story!
  - Being a Christ-follower never gives us permission to ‘look down our noses’ at anyone; it also should never keep us from sharing the “blessing” of God with others — hoarding it for ourselves.
  - Like one commentator puts it, Q: “This is our mission. Not to bend others to our will or worldview or way of living. Or, to profit from them for our gain. But, to be a blessing to all nations.” — Dr Rikk Watts (REFRAME, Regent).
  - God blesses people for one specific reason: **to be a blessing to others.** So, when the people of God are not being a blessing to their neighbour, their enemy, the nations, they’re not acting as God would have them act.

#### 4. **<Slide> Worship From Every Nation (5:9a; 7:9-10)**

- A few dream-sequences later, in Ch.7, John’s in the midst of an epic worship service: “a great multitude ... from every nation, tribe, people, and language ... (9) are worshipping the Lamb, their Saviour, Jesus (10).
- Back in Ch.5, we saw “twenty-four elders” (8), Christian representatives from around the globe, leading “every creature in heaven and on earth.” And, “with all that is in them” (13), “they sang a new song” (9) of vociferous **worship**.
- APP — And if you’ve never been part of a worship service ...
  - **<Slide>** Not in your first culture or language, you really need to, for several reasons:

1. It focuses you away from, ‘I don’t like that tune’ or, ‘I don’t like those words’ or, ‘that leader’s style doesn’t do it for me’, and puts you onto, true worship.
2. Encountering God’s presence, outside the comfort of your own comfort zone, stretches one’s worldview — in a good way.
3. Wonderful spiritual and relational bonds can be formed when we worship Jesus with other believers, in their native language.
  - o ILL — I’ve experienced this ... jumping into a ‘spontaneous-worship-Conga-line’ in Cuba, in the sweet singing and dancing circles of children in Zambia, and in the free-wheeling, loud-singing worship of our North Shore Iranian Church that meets here Sunday afternoons.
  - o Beyond the words and music [and dance moves], which were all foreign to me, these powerful worship experiences have deeply widened my understanding of God — and His world.
  - o Shown me just how big God is; and He’s not just my God!

### III. Application

- Time to ‘land the plane’ now on a few application points.

#### A. <Slide> **Cultures Matter.**

- Culture is precious. To all of us. Why ‘ancestry’ is such big business these days. Can you imagine going your whole life not knowing your own culture?
- ILL — I’ve been reading the book, *“Raised Somewhere Else”* ...
  - o Written by a 60s Scoop survivor. Between the 1960s and 80s, 60s Scoop was a systematic act of the government, in concert with Canada’s churches, to place Indigenous children into white, European homes ... to ‘assimilate’ them.
  - o Colleen Cardinal recounts her story [and the story of many of Canada’s Indigenous peoples] ...
  - o <Slide> Q: “I began to understand how loss of identity as Indigenous people had benefitted the state and how easily it gained access to our land and resources. When assimilated Indigenous people become consumed with being ‘Canadians’ and performing as mainstream consumers, they no longer care about their lands, their people or their languages.” She concludes, Q: “If we don’t reclaim our culture, relearn our languages and practice our ceremonies we are complicit with the state.” — Cardinal, p.166.
- APP — For those of us settlers here on Turtle Island, Canada ...
  - o There’re some hard lessons to learn from the dark past. We mustn’t ignore it, but we can’t allow our past to immobilize us either.

- **<Slide>** In the Book of Revelation, there is strong evidence for an eternal kaleidoscope of culture, wired by God, into the human race.
- **Culture really matters.**
- Darrell Johnson comments,
  - Q: “[In Revelation], God gathers up within God the full range of the world’s ethnic diversity ... no one ethnic grouping can bear or manifest the full image of God. **It takes all of us.**”  
— *Discipleship on the Edge*, p. 375.
  - Every culture uniquely reflects God’s image. Put another way, every culture expresses a unique aspect of the image of God.
  - Even when confronted with Jesus Himself, in person, in eternity, humanity will not simply be absorbed, or swallowed up, or, assimilated.
  - Cultures matter to God. And, therefore, cultures, all cultures, must be respected by, and matter, to God’s people.

## B. **<Slide> The Practice of Reciprocity**

- ILL — I had the joy of leading our NSAC Missions Team to Cuba in 2018.
  - Each day, our women helped Gaileen, long-time Alliance Missionary, run a Conference ... while the men worked construction at the National Ministry Centre.
  - On the work site, language and culture barriers, different building methods, and the heat, made it tough!
  - But those weren’t the biggest obstacles we faced.
  - Sadly, due to the perception of cultural superiority, the local guys were , at first, very timid, constantly deferring to us. And building was not going well. Until the Lord made a break-through.
  - The Turning Point?
  - Q: “When they knew that we knew that they knew we were useless without them.” That swung it. And the Cuban guys became our bosses and taught us how to build their way!
  - And a sweet brotherhood, in Christ, began to blossom between us.
  - The boys shared their stories with us. And we were deeply impacted. [Some, like Gianni, Juan, & Eddy are still in touch today.] And, the construction went way better after that!
- **<Slide>** APP — In her sermon here last week, Jen Singh said,
  - Q: “One thing ... I have learned as a Settler is how to receive from those ... I ‘think’ I have gone to serve.” — NSAC, 01/19/2020.
  - **Reciprocity.**
  - ILL — And today I must testify how much I’ve learned from, and received from, my Coffee Time friends over the years.

- o Guys like 60s Scoop survivors, David Craig and the late Phil Marsh.
- o Who, a few years back, spent every day for two weeks at our Mill Street rental house, lending their time, expertise, and energy ... before we moved in, to make that house liveable for my family.
- o My Coffee Time friends have taught me about my own mental health, poverty, pain, and how to cling to Jesus. And I am grateful.

### C. <Slide> The Ceilings People Live Under

- Here in Revelation, in the highest scenes of the Christian Story, we see no ceilings on anyone! And this would've rocked John's Jewish worldview.
- Sure, in the 1st Century, the Apostle had witnessed Gentiles converting to Christianity, but this vision of Jesus being worshipped in eternity by people from absolutely everywhere would've blown John's mind!
- Honest assessment reveals we, in Western society, still place many ceilings on people, that 'box them' in. Evidenced by our snap-judgments based on appearance, our profiling, our "micro-aggression" (J.S.).
- **Microaggression** is a term for our stereotypical ways of thinking that manifest into those offhand comments we make that prompt discrimination.
- <Slide> Often unintentional, or 'second-nature,' these insults can cause great harm, particularly to marginalized people groups. And **propagate the unfair ceilings** many in our country feel forced to live under.
- ILL — We heard about this ceiling in Brian's story back in Week 1.
  - o He said, Q: "[As an Indigenous person], I thought being drunk was an acceptable way to be. I thought that's what people expect of me." — Brian Lysack, (NSAC, 01/05/2020).
  - o Colleen Cardinal shares in her book, Q: "I thought this was how my life was meant to be: a [broke] Indian living on welfare, just like the stereotype." — Colleen Cardinal, *"Raised Somewhere Else,"* 2018.
  - o And so to those here today, who've ever felt forced to live under a ceiling, or ever been victims of micro-aggression ...
  - o To Indigenous people, women, immigrants, non-Caucasians, people on income assistance or disability, addicts, the homeless, WE ARE SORRY. For this is dead wrong. And not the way of Christ!
- <Slide> APP — For the Christian Story confronts micro-aggression head on.
  - o In cf. Galatians 3:27, Paul says, Q: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
  - o And I wonder, Christ-followers at NSAC, what if we asked the Holy Spirit, Who lives in us, to 'change up the lens' through which we view other people? Lately I've been asking Jesus to help me see people as He sees them.

- o Instead of judging without knowing, Spirit of God, we invite you to give us new ‘fresh eyes’ for others that reflect the loving heart of God, and free people these ceilings they’re living under?

#### D. <Slide> Correcting Christian Mission: “For All & From All”

- ILL — The Christian Story, in its purest form ...
  - o Is meant to be both fluid and dynamic. This was, and is, God’s plan.
  - o Translated into Greco-Roman culture and transported on Roman roads, from its inception in the 1st Century to just over 2 1/2 centuries later, the early church grew to a movement of an estimated 5 million people!
  - o Christianity grew rapidly, in part, because it gave dignity, and a fresh sense of belonging in the community, to all races and classes of people. And, because it was uniquely translatable into every language and culture. Still is.
- <Slide> We’re seeing a massive shift in global missions in our lifetime.
- While the Christian Church in the so-called “First World” shrinks, cross-cultural missionaries from so-called “lesser-developed, Third World” nations, where much of Christianity’s worldwide growth is happening, are now coming to Canada to do mission work. And, frankly, we need the help!
- So, just what is the role of the Western church and missionary? Are we even able go into cross-cultural situations without that air of cultural superiority?
- I believe, Christ-followers everywhere are still called to **GO**.
- For leaving behind one’s first culture, and venturing into another, remains part of the mission heart of God ... from Abraham to Jesus ... Who left behind all the comforts of heaven [His first culture] to come to earth to rescue us.
- But, how we go must be right. We must go, respectfully, like Jesus, who put on our skin, took on our language and culture, to express the love of the Creator, in a way all humanity could truly understand.
- <Slide> In his book, “From Every Tribe and Nation” ...
  - o Church historian Mark Noll writes,
    - ❓ Q: “When the ... work of Christ is ... finished, his kingdom will be made up of people from everywhere, speaking all imaginable languages, shaped by greatly different historical experiences, representing every conceivable social location, and appearing as a rainbow of ‘red and yellow, black and white.’” — Noll, p.xiii.
- The God of the Christian Story is for all nations and calls people from all nations. And, He urges us to join together, in one voice, to worship the Only One in the universe worthy of praise for eternity: Jesus, our Saviour. Amen.
- Let’s stand now and worship Jesus together!