

Sermon
May 12, 2019

Covenant Presbyterian Church
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Worthy!
Revelation 5:1-14

Recently in Boston's Symphony Hall at the end of a performance of Mozart's Masonic Funeral Music something amazing happened. Words do not do it justice so I want you to hear it. (Play recording found here: <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/q/blog/orchestra-seeks-child-who-shouted-wonder-filled-wow-at-end-of-concert-1.5128372?fbclid=IwAR0GLwPrLSFEZM2jDAf1yGLfeQieubnMTO5YkAtEuPGC2PitLRcqiVW9hEc>)

A young child's voice pierced the silence: Wow! It was spontaneous and so heartfelt that it moved the audience first to laughter and then to erupt in applause. The Handel and Haydn Society that sponsored the concert were so moved that they began a search to find the child so that they could give him a recording of the performance and invite the child and his family to meet the conductor.

Well, they found the child. It turns out the child is nine-year-old Ronan Mattin, of New Hampshire. His grandfather Stephen had taken him to the concert because he is a huge music fan. But my friends, the really amazing thing is Stephen is autistic. His grandfather said he was not very vocal and expresses himself differently than other people. And his reaction was so unexpected and yet so heartfelt. Wow! Just Wow!

I don't know if you have ever experienced that moment of wonder and awe when the only reaction that came was Wow! And yet every time I read the words of our scripture today that is the feeling I have. Wow! Just Wow! This chapter along with chapter 4 are the beginnings of a vision John had. These words were meant to be read aloud in worship and only when we hear them can we begin to comprehend the wonder of this scene. The powerful depth and breadth of these words.

The book of Revelation begins with messages to the seven churches in Asia and if you look back the message to the last church of Laodicea is a message to a church that is "*neither cold or hot*". They were lukewarm. And it just may be that they most of all needed to hear these words. In the

message to the lukewarm church we find the powerful words of invitation we know so well -

*“Listen, I am standing at the door, knocking;
if you hear my voice and open the door,
I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.
To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne,
just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.”*

And following those words we hear

“After this, I looked, and there in heaven, a door stood open!”

And he heard a voice saying

“Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

The door is open and what is revealed is amazing. A throne room - with God seated on the throne. The view is amazing - the one seated on the throne looks like jasper and carnelian and around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald. Can't you just imagine the wealth of color drawing your eye to the throne? And around the throne are twenty four other thrones with elders in white robes and golden crowns. And then you see flashes of lightning and hear peals of thunder and seven flaming torches that light up the room to reveal four living creatures with eyes all around on each side of the throne. These four creatures are a lion, an ox, an eagle, and a human being representing all creation and then you hear these powerful words:

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

and you see and hear the twenty-four elders express their wonder as they fall down in awe singing:

*“You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,*

and by your will they existed and were created.”

And then John noticed a scroll in the right hand of the one on the throne and heard the angel ask

“Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?”

Who is worthy? That is the question of the day. Who is worthy? Who or what is worthy of a reaction like young Stephen displayed? A Wow experience? Powerful, heart felt music performed to perfection often creates that reaction. A great athletic play causes us to stand and shout. The joy of seeing a child or spouse or friend graduate after years of study and effort brings shouts and smiles to our faces. Seeing a bride on her wedding day or the joy on the families faces at the sight of a serviceman returning from active duty. The beauty of God’s creation when you reach the top of a mountain and look out over the valleys and hills. These experiences are worthy of a Wow!

Today is Mother’s day. Created to be a special day to offer gratitude for what Mother’s give to each of us. Remembering our Mothers on this special day is a way of acknowledging their worth to us. We all know Mother’s are not perfect - at least I know I am not and neither was my Mother - but it gives us joy to honor them and to acknowledge what they are worth to us - which is a lot. For they are worthy of recognition for who they were and are and what they mean to us. They have value in our world.

In our passage the answer to the question Who is worthy is that no one is found worthy to open the scroll or even to look inside of it. But one of the elders speaks up and turns John’s attention in a different direction.

*“Do not weep. See the Lion of the tribe of Judah,
the Root of David, has conquered....He can open the scroll.”*

That makes sense. A lion is all powerful - the King of the jungle. But then John looks between the throne and the four living creatures and there among the elders is not a lion but a Lamb. And the Lamb has clearly been slaughtered - killed - and yet it remains standing and moves toward the throne taking

the scroll from the one seated on the throne. And suddenly a new song breaks out:

*“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals,
for you were slaughtered and by your blood
you ransomed for God saints
from every tribe and language and people and nation;
you have made them to be a kingdom and priests
serving our God,
and they will reign on earth.”*

The Lamb is worthy. He has been deemed worthy by the one sitting on the throne. Why? Because he died and shed his blood for every person in the world. We know who the Lamb is. In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, John the Baptist had proclaimed *“Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*

John A. Huffman, Jr., former pastor of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach, California tells the story of a man visiting some of the beautiful old churches in Germany.

At one church he was intrigued by the carved figure of a lamb at a point near the top of the steeple. He learned that when the church was being built, one of the craftsmen fell from the scaffolding. As the other workers rushed to find him, fully expecting he had died from the terrible fall, they were shocked to find him shaken up, but alive! As he was falling, a flock of sheep was grazing nearby and he landed on top of a lamb. Though the lamb was killed, it also broke the man's fall, and he was saved.

In recognition of that amazing event, the other craftsmen carved the lamb and placed it on the tower at the exact spot from which the man had fallen. It was a reminder of the time a man was saved by a lamb. (John A. Huffman, Jr., *Accepting Others*, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 06 October 2003, 15.) And we too my friends, have been saved by a lamb, the Lamb of God - Jesus Christ - and he is worthy of our praise.

The new song has been sung but the praise is not over. Actually it is just building. John looked over and saw and heard all the angels and the living creatures and the elders singing with full voice - with everything they had in them:

*“Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered
to receive power and wealth and wisdom
and might and honor and glory and blessing!”*

Who is worthy? The Lamb is worthy because he has died for us. What is the Lamb worthy to receive for what he did for us? Seven things - power, wealth, wisdom, might, honor, glory and blessing.

And if that wasn't enough - John heard another chorus even larger than the last for it included every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea - every creature that ever lived proclaiming:

*“To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”*

God and the Lamb are worthy of our praise. For God created the world and the Lamb gave his life for us.

Friends, the very word worship literally means, “to ascribe worth.” That is why we worship - to remind ourselves and to say to the world that God and the Lamb are worthy of our praise and honor.

Fritz Kreisler, a world famous violinist, earned a fortune with his concerts and compositions. But he generously gave most of it away. So, when he discovered an exquisite violin on one of his trips, he wasn't able to buy it. Later, having raised enough money to meet the asking price, he returned to the seller hoping to purchase that beautiful instrument. To his great dismay, it had been sold to an antique collector.

Kreisler made his way to the new owner's home and offered to buy the violin. The rare instrument was proudly displayed behind a sealed and solid glass case. Resting in its velvet couch, the

violin lay imprisoned in its climate controlled coffin. The collector said that it had become his prized possession, and he would not sell it.

Keenly disappointed, Kreisler was about to leave, when he had an idea. “Could I play the instrument once more before it’s consigned to silence?” he asked. Permission was granted, and the great virtuoso released the violin from its fancy casket and filled the room with such heart-moving music that the collector’s emotions were deeply stirred.

Kriesler again tried to buy the violin, but the collector said, “No, it is not for sale. But I have no right to keep that to myself. It’s yours, Mr. Kreisler. For you alone are worthy of the violin. Take it into the world and let people hear it.” (<https://sermons.com/sermon/prison-break/1357853>)

My friends, we are called to take our worship - our praise and adoration of God and the Lamb - into all the world so that the world might hear and join in the chorus until all the world is proclaiming blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever to the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb of God! For they are worthy! May our voices be raised in ways that create a WOW moment!