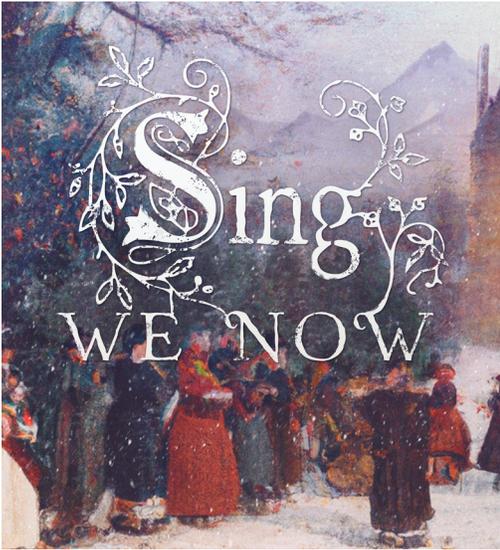




Sermon Growth Guide

January 7, 2024
Revelation Song



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Sing We Now - Revelation Song

Revelation 5:6-14

Key Verse: Revelation 5:13

“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!”

Big Idea: Jesus is worthy of all glory, honor, power... Let us join in the song of praise!

Foundations

We sing songs of heaven today. Like an immigrant who still sings the folk songs of her native land, we sing the songs of our coming Kingdom. We know them already. The Spirit has ingrained them in our hearts. When heaven comes down, these songs will fill the earth as the water covers the seas. Heaven is singing right now. Can you hear it? Can you join in the song?

In Revelation 5, we catch a glimpse of God’s throne room and we find all creation joining together to bring glory to God. The angels model for us an appropriate response to the news of Christ’s redeeming work: We are to lay all of who we are, what we are, what we have, etc. at the foot of the one who has created and redeemed! This is the song of heaven! This is what Jesus deserves! There is no greater purpose for which we were created than to worship the Lord with our entire being.

The invitation before us is to join in the song of heaven, to bring our hearts in worship of the Lord, not just in eternity, but this week! As we step into this New Year, will you join in the Revelation song? Will you gather each Sunday to rehearse the Good News? Let’s align our lives together in worship, glorifying the King of Kings.

Understanding God’s Word

Together, read Revelation 5.

The concept of worship is prominent in this passage. How do you define worship? How does it extend beyond singing in a church service?

What does it mean for believers to be a “kingdom of priests?” How does this concept translate into our actions and responsibilities as Christians?

Applying God’s Word

As we enter a new year, how might Revelation 5 guide our commitment to worship, service, and living out the gospel?

How does the imagery of the heavenly scene in Revelation 5 inform and shape our understanding of the purpose of our lives?

What challenges do we face in maintaining a consistent and wholehearted attitude of worship?

In what ways can we encourage one other to live lives of worship?

Witnessing God’s Word

Who needs to join in the song of heaven? Is there a person in your life you are praying for?

The next Alpha course begins in a couple of weeks. Who could you invite to explore faith in Jesus with you?

With all the New Year's resolutions and such, I wonder if more than a few of us have been thinking about the phrase "You are what you eat..." You know, I've also heard it said, "You are what you love." So, this morning, I ask you, "What do you love? What is worthy of your time, energy, and investment?" Billy Graham claimed, "Give me five minutes with a person's checkbook, and I will tell you where their heart is." We could just as easily say, "Give me five minutes with a person's calendar and we will tell where their heart is."

What do you value? What are you building your life around? Are you pursuing fleeting things? Or eternal things? Dear ones, I believe that if we don't have a meaningful answer to this, our lives will be small/frustrated/off-course. We'll find ourselves lost, disappointed, and lacking. Let's turn to Revelation 5 to see if there's something that may help us.

Let's get a few things cleared up right off the bat. The book of Revelation is a particular literary genre called "Apocalyptic Literature," or "Apocalyptic Prophecy." The idea with this is that the author, John, is pulling back the curtain, unveiling what is really going on in the cosmos while painting a picture of our ultimate future. And he attempts to do this with rich symbolism and figurative language.

So, in the verses leading up to our passage, John is in heaven, and sees God on His throne holding a scroll with seven seals. And an angel calls out, "Who is worthy to open the scroll?" This isn't a question of who can open some piece of mail. The scroll is God's redemption plan. The question is "Who can bring salvation? Who can save creation?"

A moment passes, and John starts to weep because no one steps forward. Apparently, there is not one person who hasn't participated in, as N.T. Wright puts it, "the age-old spoiling and trashing of God's beautiful world." John is gutted. Shattered. Verse four says, he "wept and wept."

But then, one of the heavenly beings comes to John and says, "Do not weep... There is one! The Lion of Judah! The Root of David has triumphed!"

John looks and sees, not a Lion, but a Lamb. The Lamb has Seven Horns and Seven Eyes. The horns/eyes represent the Omnipotence and Omniscience (power & knowledge). The lamb approaches the throne and takes the scroll... and heaven erupts! The heavenly host fall down and begin to sing! "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. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:9b-10)

The Lamb is worthy! But by looking at Him, you wouldn't think He was triumphant (as John was told...) He appears as "slain (v6)." What is going on here? Before the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12), God gives the people instructions. They're to offer a lamb as a sacrifice and its blood is to be applied to the doorpost of their homes. This would be a sign of who belonged to the Lord and who did not. This lamb is called the "Passover Lamb" or "Paschal Lamb" and was connected to the forgiveness of sins.

Fast forward a few hundred years, and Isaiah 53:7b foretells of a coming Messiah who will be, "led like a lamb to the slaughter..."

Fast forward again a few hundred years, and St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 5:7 "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed!" You already know what's going on. The Lamb is Jesus. This is Jesus, who has died on our behalf for the remittance of sins. And in His death, with His blood, He has PURCHASED people for God, That ancient Greek word for "purchase" was often used to describe the ransoming of slaves from a marketplace. Our God is about pulling people out of bondage. He is a redeemer. Many of you remember your life before encountering Christ. Many of you know what it is to be freed from



an addiction, a lifestyle, a habit, a lie. Others of you are here this morning wondering if you'll ever be free from something that haunts you. There's good news for you today: The Lamb has purchased you with His blood. You don't belong to the forces of this world anymore, so lay down your chains, step into the life offered you in the Kingdom, and lift your voice in praise!

Jesus didn't save just one people group, He reaches into every tribe, tongue, and nation! And this work continues after His death/resurrection!

The Lamb didn't just save one nation and He didn't just ransom us for our own sake. We were purchased to be a kingdom of priests, serving the Lord and reigning over His creation. What does this mean? At least two things:

1) We bring sacrifices to the Lord... but not animals. Hebrews 13:15 charges us—"...let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name." As a kingdom of priests, we bring a sacrifice worship to the King! That's why we gather together here each week!

2) We point people to the Lord with our lives. Do all we can to help people see/hear/know God! Evangelism. That's why we do Alpha. That's a driving force behind many of the events and programs we run. We are unapologetically out to help people meet Jesus.

Let's get back to our text... Jesus is worthy to take the scroll, and heaven explodes in worship. The camera zooms out as the second verse begins and a multitude of angels appear to proclaim: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" (Revelation 5:12b) The song moves from what the Lamb has achieved to what He deserves. What He deserves is summed up in the term, "worship."

The Greek word for worship, προσκυνέω, is often used to designate the custom of laying oneself before a person and kissing their feet or the hem of

their garment, or the ground around them. This was a common practice for the Persians and Greeks as they approached a deified king. This is the appropriate response to the news of Christ's redeeming work: We are to lay all of who we are, what we are, what we have at the foot of the one who has created and redeemed! In fact, there is no greater purpose for which we were created than to worship the Lord with our entire being! In our heavenly scene, the song continues to grow and grow with each verse! By verse thirteen, John writes: "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!'" (Revelation 5:13)

If someone was to ask, "What do you think happens at the end of time?" This verse would be the answer! This is where we're heading! This is our destination! This is the scene which should inform every moment of our lives! Jesus is worthy of worship and we are being invited to join in the song which all of creation will ultimately sing: "Praise, honor, glory, power, to Him forever and ever!"

This life is rehearsal for the worship service we will join in eternity! You may have heard the story about a young boy standing reading a plaque hanging in the hallway of a church in a military community (not unlike First Pres). He'd been there for a few minutes when the pastor walked up. The boy turned and said, "Good morning pastor... What is this?" The pastor said, "Well son... This is a list to help us remember all the members of our church who have died in the service." The boy nodded and said, "That makes sense. Which service? The 8:30 or the 10:00?" No! That's not the image we should have in mind when we think about worship! Think of a stadium experience! That's what should be in our minds. Can you picture yourself in a college football stadium screaming out a fight song? Think of an Air Force game—"Off we go into the wild blue yonder, climbing high into the sun!" Maybe a Texas game—"The eyes of



Texas are upon you... Til Gabriel blows his horn." How about CU? –"Never Give in! Shoulder to shoulder we will fight. Fight, fight, fight!" That's more like it! That's the energy and environment we should be envisioning as we think about worship! If that's how we light up and participate in a sports arena, how much more should we light up and participate in a time of worship!? Our temperament is often quite different when we come into worship than when we go to a stadium game. Maybe a fourth of us stand but never actually sing. Gathering like this is a joy and a privilege! If we have truly encountered the Risen King. If we know the Lamb, there is nothing for us to do but to respond in exuberant worship as the angels do!

You know, every time we come to the Lord's Table, it's preparation for the heavenly feast in which all who have come before and will come after us, all who belong to the Lord gather together for God's great banquet. It's a foretaste of what is to come. Likewise, every time we gather for worship, it is dress-rehearsal for our final/ultimate endeavor. At First Pres, we have two modes of worship that represent the heart-language of two portions of our congregation (Sanctuary/Worship Center). And both these modes follow the same "Arc of Worship."

1. Gathering – Called to worship, become aware of God's holiness, led to Confession/Assurance of Forgiveness
2. Listening – The Word is Read & Proclaimed
3. Communing – The Lord's Supper follows the Word.
4. Sending – Charge/Benediction

And boy, we sure do a lot of singing on both sides of the house too, don't we? Why? Why do we do so much singing? Like a fight song—a bit of mutual encouragement, but more than that it helps us remember God's Word (how many radio jingles are stuck in your head?) It's a response (a way to express how God makes us feel) and a reflection on God's character. Worship can be a mode of prayer. Many of our songs are written as prayers.

Over the last few weeks, we've been studying songs of the New Testament, particularly those surrounding the birth of Christ. We were led in worship by Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, John. Today, as we look ahead to this moment when all creation will join in bringing glory to God, we know that they'll all be there too! They'll all be part of the heavenly chorus! And the invitation today is for you to join as well.

But, friends, we know that orienting our hearts to the Lord, loving and worshiping the Lord with our lives isn't easy. John Calvin described the human heart as "a perpetual idol factory." We are always drawn to worship things other than God. Remember, our checkbooks and calendars expose us! But we need to combat this! The author David Foster Wallace provided this warning to college graduates shortly before his death: "If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough... Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you... Worship power, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out."

Friends, if we don't get worship "right," if we fail to worship God, our Creator and Redeemer our lives will be small, frustrating and off-course. We'll find ourselves lost and angry. Disappointed and lacking.

So, the question we're left with this morning is, "Will you join in the Revelation song?" Christ, the passover lamb, has purchased you with His blood. Will you join with the angels to sing His praise? Will your life serve to bring glory to the King? And, in this New Year, will you gather with us here each Sunday as we rehearse the Good News that Jesus Christ is Lord?

