

Worthy is the Lamb

3rd Sun. of Easter – 05/01/22 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Revelation 5:1-14 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 13, [The “angels, arch-angels and all the company of heaven” proclaim,] **“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”**

Introduction

✘ Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

✘ What a sight! Here it is, in God’s Book of Revelation, where He literally takes John into His heavenly throne room and reveals this grand event; full of strange creatures and sainted believers; and all of it, revolving around a Lamb.

→ A Lamb, as John says in verse six, that looks like He “had been slain” comes bursting onto the scene; takes a scroll; and then everyone goes crazy with relief and great joy. Why? because this Lamb’s victorious work makes Him worthy to do it! And that’s it; that’s today’s text!

✘ But still that’s not it, because there is always more to the Book of Revelation. That’s because Revelation is a symbolic book; not meant to be read literally, like a newspaper.

→ Officially it falls into the category of “Apocalyptic Literature”, meaning it addresses the “end times” – that which is yet to come. As such, this book is meant to be understood as revealing multiple descriptions of Jesus and His Church in judgment on the Last Day, yet always with application to us and our world now today. So whenever you read Revelation, you always have to go back to the life and words of Jesus; back to the Old Testament Scriptures, and to the entire life of the Church for a clear understanding.

I. Only the Lamb is Worthy

✘ Let’s begin by considering this Lamb. Verse 12 says, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain”. The key word is “was” – past tense. He is no longer dead; no longer buried. He – Jesus – lives! And in His hand is the fate of the world. In John 1:29, John the Baptizer points to Him and proclaims, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. That means He alone is worthy.

→ And friends – that also means that you are not worthy. We see in this text that even in heaven no one was worthy...until Jesus ascends and comes to His throne. Only He lived the praiseworthy life. He’s the only one in all of history who has no secrets to keep. Only Jesus lived His earthly life perfectly under God’s Law; a blessed life with no shame or regret. You don’t have that, do you? Neither do I. And the same is true for our entire world.

II. Sin Makes You Unworthy

✘ Look, I know it’s something none of us likes to hear. Because if you are not worthy, then what does that say about all of your so-called accomplishments? What’s that say about the things in your life of which you are the proudest? Don’t these count for anything?

→ What about the times you were selfless and giving; the times you went out of your way to help another person? What about the times you stood for a good and noble cause instead of being silent? What about the times you gave helpful advice; pointing someone in a good direction? Doesn’t that make you worthy?

✘ According to God’s Word, no, it doesn’t. Paul says in Romans 3:10, “None is righteous, no, not one”. Our entire world hates to hear it, but works do not make a person worthy. That’s the

problem, because all people are sinful by nature. Ephesians 2:3 says, we all “were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind”. All people are tainted in their innermost being.

→ So stop; stop hurting yourself by pointing at others. Just consider your own life. Are there ever times when you are selfish, lustful, disobedient to authorities, unjustly angry, bitter toward others, covetous, neglectful of God’s Word and prayer or self-idolizing? I don’t think I need to list examples of these, do I? Not if we’re all honest with ourselves.

→ If you are guilty of even one of these, then its inherent wickedness spills over into your words and actions, contaminating them too.

- ✘ Here’s the deal – and I know this is hard to accept, but according to Scripture even your good works are contaminated. Even if a sinner were to do something great and noble in the eyes of the world, like curing cancer or giving millions of dollars away in scholarships, it would not, and cannot make that person worthy before God! Because of your deep-down-in-the-soul nature, you are, as a sinner, unworthy. It’s built into the DNA that you inherit all the way back to Adam that your works don’t match up. This sinful nature means that even the “good” works you and I do, are at their core contaminated and unworthy before God.

III. Only One Who is Worthy Can Make Worthy Works

- ✘ So, contrary to the way our world thinks, works do not make a person worthy. It’s actually the other way around. The person makes the works worthy. If someone – anyone is righteous, pure, just, spiritually clean, wholesome, and good to the core then that person’s works will be the same. That person’s worthiness makes his works worthy, even if it’s something simple and mundane, like taking out the trash or buying groceries.

→ It is because these works flow out from a pure source – just like pure spring water comes from a pure source in the mountains – so it is that where the person is good and pure, there His works are too.

- ✘ That means that only Jesus is truly worthy, because at His core Jesus alone is true God and true man. He is clean, good, and pure by nature. From birth He is innocent and clean.

→ On top of that, Jesus alone lived His entire earthly life worthy of God under the Ten Commandments. Hebrews 4:15 says that in Jesus “we...have a high priest who...in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

→ No one else past, present or future to live this life can ever say that. So Jesus alone is righteous and worthy. So, just as God the Father required it, Jesus alone is the perfect sacrifice for sinners. He is the Lamb who was slain on the cross to pay for all sin and therefore save all sinners. He willing laid down His perfect life to pay the price for your sin and the sins of all people.

→ Yet just as the Lamb in our text is living, so is Jesus. The Lamb who was slain, Christ our Lord is risen! *He is risen indeed.* Alleluia! And now as God reveals the events of Jesus entering into the throne room at His ascension, we have the assurance that He is the living and worthy Lamb who once was slain.

- ✘ Worthy to do what? Worthy to take God’s sealed scroll, describing God’s plan of salvation and His work in the Church. He is worthy to take it because, as verse five tells us, He “has conquered, so that He can open the scroll and its seven seals”.

→ His death, as the perfect sacrifice, is worthy to undo the curse and contamination of sin; to purify souls with His perfect blood. And His resurrection on the third day is worthy to conquer death forever. This mind-boggling truth of His love for us all folks means that all of His works

and words are worthy because of who He is. And because He loves you and me perfectly, His works and words and love then spill out upon, into and over us too.

IV. Jesus' Worthiness is Yours – A Free Gift

✘ This means that He makes you worthy in God's eyes, my dear Christian! His is all one big worthy gift – given freely for all the sin-filled unworthy souls. Though you were unworthy in yourself, now you are declared worthy by the Lamb's own Word.

→ In His grace, He proclaims you righteous. Your sins, which are so inherent in you, are no longer charged against you! This is what it means to be "redeemed" by the Lamb. His perfect blood is on your head. It covers and cleanses and restores you; making you worthy to receive the label "innocent of all sin" only because of Jesus; only because of His merits given to You as a free gift in Your baptism!

✘ In fact, through faith in Jesus, even your works are now made worthy as well. His work and Word has changed your very nature, from condemned to forgiven; from eternal death to eternal life; from unworthy of heaven to eternal citizen in heaven.

→ And this even affects you and me here on earth right now, while we still live and struggle in a sin-filled life. Because of Jesus' victory you now live, move, and have your being grounded in the forgiveness of sins; covered by the blood of Jesus. This means that your parenting is made worthy, even when there are bumps along the way. Your job is made worthy – God-pleasing in fact, regardless of whether it seems as if you're doing anything remotely worthy or spiritual.

→ Yes, because the believer is the one who is sanctified, then whatever the believer is now doing, whether it is farming, nursing, teaching, banking, janitoring, trash compacting, changing messy diapers, or being the fry guy at the local fast-food restaurant – that believer is made worthy. All of those works are made into a high, holy spiritual sacrifice, as verse 10 says, by "a kingdom of priests", because the people doing these works are the ones made worthy by the Lord Jesus; the victorious Lamb Himself.

V. We Sing to Our Savior, "Worthy is the Lamb"

✘ John shows us that the company of heaven – the angels and believers who have arrived before God's throne ahead of us – they truly "get" how tremendous all of this is. They cannot contain their relief and joy when the victorious Lamb takes up the scroll – showing that He alone has fulfilled God's plan and attained His victory and salvation for His people.

→ Verse nine tells us that they take up a "new song"; a song that has never been song in heaven before that time, because it was not until the Lamb had been slain and then rose from death as the eternal conqueror of sin, death and Satan for us all, that God's promise was perfectly fulfilled!

✘ It is a song that you and I, my dear Christian friends, rejoice in and have the privilege to sing as well. Yes, He has made us worthy to sing of the worthiness of the Lamb; to join the countless numbers of angels and saints in heaven who sing the new song of salvation.

→ We are thrilled to join our voices to theirs in singing the Lamb's praises here as God brings His throne room to us whenever we gather in this place; in His sanctuary for worship.

→ We may not physically see all of them with us. We may not audibly hear them singing at our side. But you can believe they are here, singing with us, because God has given us the same eyes of faith as he gave John there in His perfect Word; through the same Holy Spirit that revealed this all to Him on the island of Patmos.

✘ Because Jesus lives and reigns on the throne, He has made us His Church Triumphant along with His Church in heaven. So we sing the “new song” with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, saying to Jesus, “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, and You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth” (vv. 9-10).

→ Yes, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” “To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” (vv.12-13).

→ And so we follow the elders and the four living creatures and all the people of God in declaring this to be our faith as well today; declaring “yes, it is true” by saying together, “Amen”. Say it with me boldly, “Amen”.

✘ Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed!* Alleluia! Amen.