

Third Sunday in Advent
Dec. 13, 2015
Revelation 5:7-14

In Christ Jesus, the only Man truly worthy of the praise of men, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Last week we heard the Apostle John tell us how important confession of sins is to our life. Our theme was **“As we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ we see that---SINCERE CONFESSION OF ALL SINS IS THE ONLY WAY TO AVOID SPIRITUAL DISASTER!”**

Remember the ditch on both sides---either making light of sin, or saying that we have no sin. Do you remember the last point? **God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins through Jesus our Advocate and Atoning Sacrifice.**

Well this morning we hear of that same Apostle John seeing visions of heaven and relating those sights to us. In our Scripture reading of Revelation 4 John saw symbolical pictures of the beauty and glory of heaven. Then he saw in the right hand of God the Father sitting on His throne, a scroll, written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. On this scroll was written the future events of the world until judgment day.

As we read no one was found worthy to open these seals and reveal the contents of that scroll---to reveal the future of the world, especially the future as it pertains to the Church, all believers in Christ. So John began to weep. He wept not only because he would not know the future but because of man's incompetence and unworthiness to open this scroll.

But suddenly, there was one who was found worthy, a Lamb. A Lamb who looked as though it had been slain. This Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes. He came and took the scroll out of the Father's hand.

The four living creatures and the 24 elders formed a circle around the Lamb, fell down and sang a new song. The canopy of heaven resounded with the blessed testimony that the Lamb alone was worthy to open the scroll. He alone was worthy because He had been slain to redeem and save all of mankind and make them kings and priests.

And that is what we are encouraged to do today. As we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ we:

SING A NEW SONG IN PRAISE OF THE LAMB!

I. He ALONE is Worthy!

II. He ALONE was Slain.

III. He ALONE Redeemed us.

From Scripture we know that this Lamb is none other than Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. He was slain on the cross and came back to life again. He alone, out of all of mankind, was worthy to open the scroll. Why? Why was no man worthy or able?

Well, you see, opening the scroll meant more than just revealing the future events of the world and of the believers. By having the power and authority to open the scroll it showed that the future of the Church and of the world was in Christ's hand, under His control. This symbolical act that John witnessed we declare to be true every time we proclaim in the Apostles' Creed: **He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of God the Father.**

All things are under Jesus' feet as we are told in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. All future developments in history are subject to His knowledge, will and control. That is why history, is His Story! No angel, no king, no president, no dictator, no power, no one was fit for this honor. The Lamb alone was worthy!

And why? The song of praise tells us: **YOU ARE WORTHY TO TAKE THE SCROLL, AND TO OPEN ITS SEALS; FOR YOU WERE SLAIN AND HAVE REDEEMED US TO GOD BY YOUR BLOOD OUT OF EVERY TRIBE AND TONGUE AND PEOPLE AND NATION.**

Not Moses, not Elijah, not King David, not John the Baptist, not Mary, not the Apostles Peter or Paul, but the Lamb that was slain. He alone earned the honor and right of governing the course of human history by giving His life and shedding His blood for all people.

All of the countless millions of sacrificed lambs of the Old Testament were symbols, pictures, types of this Lamb. This Lamb came from God, born of a human mother, carried our sorrows and grief's, was stricken, smitten and afflicted by God for us; was wounded for our transgressions; was

bruised for our iniquities. He was led to the slaughter and did not open His mouth in rebuke, or defiance, or rebellion. He willingly gave of His body and blood for us.

That cannot be said of any other person in the history of the world. Yes, there have been kind, giving people; even people willing to give their life for others. But never was there such a one as this One. Perfect God and perfect Man in one person. The perfect substitute for our punishment and guilt. The perfectly willing scapegoat to pay the price.

And now the Lamb, Jesus, gets the praise and honor. He opens the scroll! He rules all history! He has been placed as the head over all things; all principality, power, might and dominion; over every name that is named throughout all time and eternity.

By His death, this Lamb redeemed, that is bought back, paid the ransom price for the souls of all people so that people from every nation, people, tribe and tongue can call God their Father and Jesus their Lord and Savior.

And finally our song of praise declares:

IV: He ALONE made us Kings and Priests to reign with Him.

In I Peter 2:9 we read: **BUT YOU ARE A CHOSEN GENERATION, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, HIS OWN SPECIAL PEOPLE, THAT YOU MAY PROCLAIM THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT.** We are kings together with Christ the King. We are part of His kingdom. We share in His rule of the world. We have the rule over this world which He created and together with Him we proclaim the Word of God which rules in the hearts and lives of His people.

We also are priests. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel were not allowed to offer sacrifices or to approach God directly in His Temple. They offered their sacrifices and approached God through intermediaries, the Levitical priests. But, now since Christ, our Great High Priest has ascended on high; the way into God's presence is open to all believers. We, through Christ, can forgive sins and in His name can pray directly to the Father.

The final words of this hymn of praise states a tremendous truth for us Christians: **AND WE SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH.** As members of Christ's kingdom, His Church, we shall literally "continue to reign on the earth." This reign is not about a thousand year millennial reign someday. This reign has already begun. It began at Christ's resurrection and will continue until Judgment Day. What a comfort that this was for John and all of those Christians of His day who read this message. Many of them were being persecuted. The Roman government had been confiscating their property, exiling them from their homes and putting some of them to death. They were undergoing tremendous hardships and their enemies appeared to have the upper hand, to be wining the battle for souls, to be defeating the Church of Christ.

But this song of praise tells us that we will continue to reign on earth with Jesus. The Lord Himself told us that not even the gates of hell shall prevail against His Church. And what a comfort that is for us here at Peace Thru Christ. Christ is ruling in and through us with His Word, with His love, His forgiveness, His Spirit even as He did back then with John and the people of his day.

What a comfort that is to know when moments of depression come, when our latter years become more of a burden than a joy—Christ is still in control and we are ruling with Him.

What a comfort that is to know when we look to the future as individuals as well as a congregation. The gloom and doom of economic forecasts, or terrorist's plots, or Satan's attacks should not scare us, cause us to despair and give up. All the riches of this world are God's and He dispenses them as He sees fit and as He knows is best for each of us. Our church budget will be met, our bills will be paid, our families will be raised, our work for Jesus will be done, through the ruling power of Christ in His Word dwelling in us.

The proclamation of His saving Gospel message will produce fruit and gather a harvest of souls, as it has in the past, it will continue in the future as the Lord determines and wills—for Jesus is the Lamb who was slain and now rules forever and ever.

How blessed we are that God has revealed for us repentant sinners our future, that we on that last great day will be part of that heavenly choir, singing our praises, and privileged to bow down in humble and joyful worship in the presence of the Lamb who sits on the throne!

Through all of the difficulties and trials that touch our lives, these words stand as a powerful encouragement. We never need to despair because of our many sins. We never need feel that we are all alone. We never need to give up because we suffer constant and chronic pain. Even if we suffer

persecution, no matter how desperate our life may seem, no matter how depressed we may feel, we have someone and something that far overshadows all of our problems. A Savior who was slain for us and rose again to assure us of complete forgiveness and everlasting life with Him. We have a place reserved for us around the throne of God face to face with the Lamb of God!

Yes, **"WORTHY IS THE LAMB WHO WAS SLAIN TO RECEIVE POWER AND RICHES AND WISDOM, AND STRENGTH AND HONOR AND GLORY AND BLESSING! BLESSING AND HONOR AND GLORY AND POWER *BE* TO HIM WHO SITS ON THE THRONE, AND TO THE LAMB, FOREVER AND EVER!"**

Amen.