

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. <sup>12</sup> In a loud voice they were saying:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,  
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength  
and honor and glory and praise!”

<sup>13</sup> 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!”

<sup>14</sup> The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped. (Revelation 5:11-14)

### **Worthy is the Lamb!**

When you look at Christianity in America today, what do you see? How is Christianity doing these days? While still the most prominent religion in the United States, the number who claim to be Christian has been on a steady decline for a number of years. If you listen to some talking-points, you would hear that Christianity is under attack. It would seem like Christianity is slowly-yet-surely dying out as the church is caught up in one scandal and the next. It's not as socially advantageous to claim to be Christian. What about Christianity in Nebraska? Closer to home, how is Christianity doing? More people closer to home might claim to be Christian. But, then again, look at how our church is and other churches are on a regular Sunday. It's not like we are struggling to find room for everyone...At times it looks like Christianity is losing to everything else that is going on in the world. It can seem like it is dying a slow painful death at the hands of busy schedules and messed up lives. At least, that's what we tend to see.

There's the Apostle John on the island of Patmos. A political prisoner of the State government, they exile John for preaching the Good News of Jesus. John is well familiar with the suffering and patient endurance that the church must endure; he's your brother and companion in it. Though the church had been growing and spreading, it faced constant struggle and persecution where Christian's lives and livelihoods are in danger for the faith they confess. I'm sure at times it must have felt that for every one step forward, it was two steps back. Is it really worth it to continue in this? It sure doesn't look like it.

It's while John is on this island that he sees more clearly. John receives this vision, a revelation. He looks and at the same time hears the voice of many angels beyond

number, along with the living creatures and elders all surrounding a throne that is in the center of them. Imagine an enormous crowd of people that the ticket counters were unable to keep track of filling a large stadium. All of the millions, thousands upon thousands, join together to praise the One. In a loud voice they say: **“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”** I can imagine the ground shaking, the hairs raising on my neck, the goose bumps along with the chills hearing this multitude speak. There is no going through the motions or mumbling along. There isn't any nervous looks or embarrassed feelings wondering if someone actually heard you. This is praise for the one who is worthy of it all. You know him. He's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He's the Lamb who took your place, pierced for your rebellion against God and crushed for your sin. He's the Lamb who was slain and now raised to life again. Jesus. Worthy is the Lamb!

But is he? Almost half of the population of the United States according to recent surveys doesn't think so. Even those who might claim to be Christian might wonder if Jesus is or not. He will be quick to point out the poverty that is still rampant in the world. She will point to the wars that continue to be fought and injustices in the world. He will direct your eyes to the sicknesses that continue to ravage people. She will bring up how babies die and young ones full of life are taken from us. For many this is clear evidence you can see that Jesus is not worthy of any praise. On top of that, he will insist that Jesus has never done anything for him. He did everything himself and doesn't need anyone else. She will point out the fact that she's been completely fine without him in her life. From what so many see, Jesus is not worthy of their time, thoughts, or considerations.

One day they will. That's what Jesus lets John see on that island of Patmos. One day all will see. One day all will confess that Jesus is Lord. His enemies will shriek and scream at the truth because by then it will be too late. They won't want to say it. But say it they will as they are condemned for all eternity. What they were too blind to see will be clear as day. Worthy is the Lamb! We aren't giving him anything that isn't already his. All the power, wealth, wisdom, and strength belong to him. All the honor and glory and praise belongs to no one else.

Do you see it? Or, are you like me who foolishly forgets how truly small my work is in the grand scheme? Jesus doesn't need me to help him keep his promises; he's quite capable to fulfill them and often does in spite and despite me. How foolish I am to think this is such a great burden to follow his will when he promises his yoke is easy and burden is light. All the power belongs to him! That he lets me take part in His work is grace alone.

How silly to think that he needs my money in the offering plate. All wealth belongs to him—who am I? How silly it is to think that I need to keep some of my offering for myself, just in case, as if He's not going to give me everything that I need for body and life. How silly too think that when things are tight I need to pull back on my giving because, "You just don't know." All wealth belongs to him and he promises to open the flood gates of heaven to bless me when I trust him in my giving.

How slow I am to realize the guidance I need for my life, for my work, for my service comes from him who holds all the wisdom. If only I would take more time to stop and listen rather than trying to tell him what he should be doing. If I only took more time to listen instead of giving him advice that he does not need. And then that he allows me to speak to him in prayer, and he listens. And he answers. And he acts. Again, I don't deserve that!

Shame on me for doubting his wisdom, strength and his power as I keep myself up at night dwelling upon things that are beyond my control. How much time have I wasted and extra stress I've put on myself instead of resting securely in his mighty hands?

Why do I waste so much time trying to exalt myself in the eyes of other people striving for honor in this world? Why do I insist on lifting up my own opinions demanding they admit that I am right and they should listen to me? Why do I worry my little head over whether or not he will praise me for my efforts or she will praise me for a job well done? Why do I need it? What I have already in Jesus greatest by far. He's the one who all the glory, honor, and praise belongs. Then that he allows me to share in this and receive it while he carries his work out through in whatever calling you might have, what undeserved love!

Worthy is the Lamb to receive all of this. And rightly so! Look at what he has done. He's the Lamb who set aside his glory for a time. The one with all the power takes on flesh and blood to be a weak baby dependent on a first-time mom and inexperienced dad. The one with all the wealth walks our earth without a home to call his own or place to lay his head while he relies on the goodwill of others. He who holds all the wisdom allows himself to be questioned, to be tested, people to turn their back on him when they didn't want to hear any more. The weight of the world rests so effortlessly in his hands and at the same time we see him struggle under the weight of his own cross to the place where he would die. Instead of glory he would be betrayed, disowned, mocked and ridiculed. His seat of honor will be the place of dishonor as he is counted amongst the transgressors and sinners on the cross. Instead of praise and blessing he will be rejected by the ones he came to save, cursed by God and forsaken by him.

The innocent Lamb who has done nothing wrong must die in the place of those who are by nature blinded by their own reason, lost in sin, chained by death, and under the rule and authority of the devil. That's why he came to this world. He's the Lamb who came to be slain. His blood pours out and covers me so that God's judgment passes over me onto him. He is crushed and by his wounds, we are healed. He gives up his life for us only to do what he promised: pick it back up again. He has purchased and won me from the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy blood and innocent suffering and death. He's crushed Satan's head and destroyed his work. That Lamb who was slain has been raised again to live, swallowing up death and spitting it out. He lives and rules eternally!

And so we praise praise him because he does all of this not for himself but so that we might be his own and live with him in his kingdom. He brings you to himself in the waters of baptism where you are washed with the blood of the Lamb, declared child of God and heir of all that is his own. The same living Jesus who feeds his disciples breakfast on the beach is your living Jesus who is the Bread of Life feeding you with his body and blood in the Lord's Supper. He who is the Life breathes new life into you by the Holy Spirit who opens your eyes to see and your heart to believe this is most certainly true.

Therefore, one day we will stand united before the throne with all every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth singing his praises in perfect happiness and joy without sadness, sickness, or pain. The victory is already guaranteed because Jesus lives! That's what John sees in Revelation and now we see with eyes of faith. What you face today will be a passing memory you remember know more. Jesus wins; which means you do too. Until that great day when we will surround that throne, we have a taste of joining those praises here in God's house as we speak in one voice our confession and sing together as brothers and sisters in Christ his worthiness of our praise. But our worship isn't just among these four walls. We do more worship out there as you serve your neighbor and love them. As you point him to Jesus, as you say no to self and follow Jesus' will, as you pray for all people and take her to God's throne—that is your worship.

Until that Great Day we continue to praise the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever! And with the living creatures we say, "It shall be so!" Amen.