

“Worship!”—Revelation 5:11-14

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice,

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

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing,

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

And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the elders fell down and worshiped.

I mentioned last Sunday in passing that many people find this Book of Revelation to be confusing and a bit scary. It’s full of images of multifaced creatures and beasts with horns, and trying to understand the sequence of what’s taking place can befuddle a person. In fact, Martin Luther, the leader of the Protestant Reformation, favored taking the Book of Revelation out of the Bible—he said it was too confusing for people to understand it. But if we remember that these images were not really meant to be visualized but understood symbolically, and if we remember that this book was written to encourage persecuted Christians in Asia Minor in the early 90s of the first Christian century, then the message, as I’ve shared before, becomes clear: as Dr. Fred Craddock put it so simply, “It doesn’t matter which team is on the field, Jesus wins!”

Yet one of the themes that often gets lost as people try to interpret this Book of Revelation, and especially as some people try to match contemporary events and people to the book, is worship. There are so many hymns and acclamations in this book, and I could have picked any one of them as my text for today, but I just happened to pick this one. And maybe that’s because it reminds me, at least, of what worship is all about: it’s about giving honor and glory and blessing to “the One who sits on the throne” and “the Lamb that was slaughtered” for your sins and my sins and the sins of the whole world. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—God, Three-in-One—are the center and focus of our worship, whether individually and privately or together as the Body of Christ and the community of faith.

Unfortunately, as we’re still living in the remnants of the modern age and trying to live into the post-modern era, too many Christians have been afflicted with the idea that worship is about “me” and “us”: What do *I* get out of it? What do *we* get out of it? What does the music do for *me* or for us? What does the sermon

do for *me* or for *us*? And so on and so on. I've seen so many people over the years jump from church to church to church, with their reason being, "I wasn't being fed there."

Maybe people don't get fed because they don't bring the right utensils to the table. Maybe people don't get fed because their focus is all wrong. Maybe people don't get fed because their focus in worship is all wrong—maybe they don't get fed because their focus in worship is on themselves.

What I want to suggest to you this morning is that we can and will be fed by God in the power of the Holy Spirit if we come to worship focused on him and him alone. If we worship "the One who sits on the throne" and "the Lamb that was slaughtered"—if we worship God in spirit and in truth—then I believe that we will be blessed; we will be fed. When we bless God's holy name, then we receive a blessing! It's not that we worship to get a blessing—that's self-centered. It's not that we bless God's name to get blessed—that's self-focused. But when we bless God's name in private worship or in corporate worship, there's a blessing that comes back to us from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

This Book of Revelation is shot through and through with worship. In fact, at the end, as John sees the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven to earth, he is shown within it "the throne of God and of the Lamb," and he says "[H]is servants will worship him." In the end, that's what God's faithful people will be doing—worshiping him. But until then, our first duty—indeed, our first desire—should be to worship "the One who sits on the throne" and "the Lamb who was slaughtered," for they and they alone—not me, not you, not us, not any creature—are worthy of honor and glory and blessing. Thanks be to God!