

MESSAGE - Heavenly Worship

September 10, 2023

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SCRIPTURE Psalm 150

Praise the Lord!

Praise God in his sanctuary;

praise him in his mighty heavens.

Praise God for his acts of power;

praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Praise God with the sounding of the trumpet,

praise him with the harp and lyre,

Praise God with timbrel and dancing,

praise him with the strings and pipe,

Praise God with the clash of cymbals,

praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord!

SCRIPTURE Revelation 5:8-14

⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying:

"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.

¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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!"

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!"

14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

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When this choir sings.....

It can be a transcendent experience.

Like perhaps we are no longer just in this room....but that we have joined the heavenly throne room of God.

John envisioned such while in prison on the island of Patmos.

Now the book of Revelation can be a difficult read as it uses all kinds of imagery and symbols but chapters 4 and 5 are all about something we come together to participate in every week: worship.

John describes how there is every kind of creature coming together to worship To praise the Almighty with words we claim and use every time we celebrate communion:

"Holy, holy, holy  
is the Lord God Almighty,<sup>[b]</sup>  
who was, and is, and is to come."

And a drama unfolds before John in which an angel holding a scroll cries out if there is any worthy to open a particular scroll. And there seems to be none. The angels aren't worthy. The elders aren't worthy. The mysterious 4 living creatures aren't worthy. And John becomes distraught and cries because no one is worthy. Until the lamb steps forward. A slain lamb. This is the one worthy to open the scroll.

And then it says that they all sang a new song:

*"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.*

Singing the new song.

This is what our time together is about.

And there's something about music that helps us to do just that.

It is what the writer of Psalm 150 knows.

That praising God simply with our words just doesn't get the job done....use the instruments!

Music helps us to praise and to worship.

It gives voice to feelings: to our fears that we set before the Lord; to our overwhelming gratitude for God calming our deepest fears.

It has the power to reach in and pull us out of our navel-gazing selves and help us to turn our eyes upon God.

For that is the heart of worship: to let the sights and the prayers and the bread and the cup and the water in the font and the singing to turn our eyes upon God and experience the reality of God. It is what we do....

And yet worship is something more than just what we do.

Because when we truly worship, something happens to the human heart – it opens and becomes receptive

Don Saliers....United Methodist clergy and professor at Candler Theological Seminary in Atlanta – and father to Emily Saliers, one of the Indigo Girls writes in this book "Music in Christian Worship" the most important question for us as we think about worship:

"Can music voice what God wants us to hear?

The mystery is how music could reveal to us and make our heart more deeply attuned to what God wishes to speak to us."

I believe what Don is getting at here is that when we participate in worship – in singing the new song, we can receive the message of the new song:

That the one who is worthy to take the scroll and open its seals is worthy because of what he has done

And what he has done has eternal implications for me.

In other words:

Singing that new song can help me repent

Singing that new song can lead me to receive forgiveness  
Singing that new song can set me free

Singing that new song helps me experience being touched by God....  
For worship is not just about what we do.  
But it opens us up to what God is doing.

And music plays a key role in that because of what music is capable of doing.  
It is capable of transporting us into the heavenly throne room and making something  
intangible very real....

What we do in here during our services is always to be about God in Jesus Christ.

But today I do want to add a word of appreciation:  
Katrina Jackson, your ministry has helped us to truly worship  
    To praise God and sing the new song  
    And to experience what God is doing with us.  
    And we thank you.

Let us praise and join the heavenly worship:

**Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,  
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength  
and honor and glory and praise!"**  
**"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb  
be praise and honor and glory and power,  
for ever and ever!**  
**Amen.**