

WELCOME 8th May 2022 – 4 Easter '22 C

Revelation 5:1-14

Welcome! Happy **Mother's Day!** It's great to be together again... **Bible Study Qs** are provided to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word & work in your life, then you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-up**. We're still doing things we need to maintain a level of safety: Hand sanitizer. Masks optional but certainly your choice. Thanks set-up & clean-up folks!

As we move into this week... The recent **rains** throughout NSW unleashed a torrent of water that overflowed cities & lives w/ unstoppable power & force. The resurrection of the Lamb-who-was-slain unleashes an unstoppable force that powerfully moves through this world sweeping up everything before it; bringing life & hope, healing & strength.

The epicentre of this force from Easter on is God's people at worship, singing a new song revealing a new reality living new lives. As that happens: Out of darkness, light spills forth. Out of despair, hope arises. Out of discouragement, inspiration awakens. Out of death, life flows. The Lamb-who-was-slain suffers & triumphs to open the scroll, redeem his people & **unleash** us for lives of unceasing worship.

"Blessing and honour and glory and power
belong to the one sitting on the throne
and to the Lamb forever and ever."

Remember... You were created & redeemed to worship the Living God!

Christ is alive & present w/ his people & through Christ risen/ruling God draws us into worship & then out from worship as an unstoppable force that glorifies God & invites the world to join our praise.

We'll continue to experience that today...

Let's pray...then hear God's Word...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Psalm 127:4

*One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.*

Risen Christ, you are the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. You were slain but are alive forevermore. You are seated on the heavenly throne in unspeakable glory & unimaginable power. You call us to worship & you alone are worthy of praise. All power, wealth, wisdom, might, honour, glory & blessing belong to you forever & ever. May our lives reveal & proclaim the beauty of life with you. Let our gathering in your name demonstrate your glory in ever-increasing ways. Through you alone we pray...Amen.

Revelation 5

FAITH CHAT:

1. When is it hardest for you to worship?
2. Respond to the AW Tozer quote on the Growing Praise: *"I can safely say, on the authority of all that is revealed in the Word of God, that any man or woman on this earth who is bored & turned off by worship is not ready for heaven."*
What do you think?

Then Video...worshipinspiration

4 EASTER '22 C – IN CHRIST'S HANDS: UNVEILING THE NEW REALITY – UNLEASHING WORSHIP

Worship. No other word in the church vocabulary raises alarm bells like that one. We know the anxiety, raised hackles & upset around songs & styles, clothing & colours, architecture & ambience, location, length & leadership. The good news is...all of that is **irrelevant**. Like the video noted: **So** long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly & so painfully as to find someone to worship. Dostoyevsky – Only thing that matters w/ re worship: Not “if/how” **but** What/Who. Why do I say that?

As Fyodor Dostoyevsky says & we all know...*Everybody. Worships. Something. Everybody.* From the convinced atheist to the complacent follower of Jesus to the most devout disciple. Everybody. Worships. Something. **EVERYBODY.** **Worship is** giving yourself wholeheartedly (body & soul) to another. Worship is offering the best of all you are & all you have to someone/something else out of the heartfelt conviction that they are worth it...they are worth you & your best. Everyone does that...Everyone.

But in that a real problem arises: Paul writes: **Rom 6:16:** *Don't you realize you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? (offer yourself) You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey (offer yourself) God, which leads to righteousness.* That to which we give our best – release our hearts & souls – devote our time talent treasure – look to for our identity security satisfaction hopes dreams aspirations... value above all else...**not only** is that our “god” but **it is also** that to which our lives are being conformed moulded. **What** we are worshipping, we are becoming. – Emerson You become what you worship. What absorbs your interest intellect & intentions ultimately captivates you – claims you. Only 2 options: sin => death **OR** God => righteousness/life *You will show me way of life, granting me the joy of your presence & the pleasures of living w/ you forever – Ps 16:11*

Which is why Paul later pleads w/ the Roman Xns: **Therefore,** *I plead with you, brothers & sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy & pleasing to God—this is your true & proper worship. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good & pleasing & perfect.* – Rom 12:1-2 Seeing what God has now given you in Jesus Christ...poured out the life of his Son for you... *Take your everyday, ordinary life - your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, & walking-around life - & place it before God as an offering.*

Now what does all this have to do with Rev 5? Remember in Rev 4 John is invited to join/come up into the company of heavenly glory & God's throne is at the centre of everything & the brightness of God's radiance floods in all directions. Now we see a scroll in God's right hand...signifies God's final word for all that God has created &

there are none worthy to open & declare this final word of God. John weeps. If there is no one to speak God's ultimate/last word...none worthy to declare God's word all seems lost. But there is One...Lion of the Tribe of Judah...the Lamb-who-was-slain who suffers & triumphs to open the scroll & bring God's true desire design intention & will to fulfillment. In his presence the worship of heaven intensifies & focusses on Jesus, the Lamb-who-was-slain who suffered & triumphed & now reigns w/ the Father forever Jesus steps up to complete God's work/will by his Word & worship/anticipation ↑

Here's the exciting thing: **Worship** is at the heart of the Revelation. Worship is the driver for everything that happens from here on. Dr Joe Strelan, giant man of faith & wisdom @ Adelaide seminary, always made sure we saw that up to this point in Rev, God's word through Jesus by John is addressed very specifically to the church...the 1st 4 chapters speak to the unique circumstances of the daily life of the church in the world & the church's tendency toward complacency & compromise. The 1st chapters remind us we live knowing *The Powers That Be aren't* the final power. The rulers of this world **don't** rule forever. The trinkets & toys of this world fade/fail... **AND** any attempted juggling act...both/and...have a foot in each camp...a bet both ways is doomed to disaster. There can be only 1 Lord...1 Throne...1 Master...

OUR confession, *JESUS IS LORD* is a slap in the face to all the Caesars & other “gods” of this world, but it is tough to be in the world & not of it. Engage in normal life & not compromise what you believe to fit in – go along get along – keep peace in your house.

But then John experiences the worship of heaven & discovers it is only as the church worships that God's final intention for all things comes to pass...only as the life of the church is centered in worship will all that God has in store be unleashed. Every blessing God intends to pour out & every judgment that is to be made...the reality & power of the resurrection & new life in Christ can only reach its fullest as the church worships & nothing happens here as God intends w/o worship. Nothing happens in your life or mine that God truly seeks to bring to us...no blessing...no transformation...no victory occurs apart from worship...the fellowship/*κοινωνία* of the worshipping church was the lifeblood & heartbeat of the first followers of Jesus. John sees “on earth as it is in heaven” is not a slogan. It's truth...everything good radiates from the throne as God's people surround it in worship...communally & individually 24/7 - *offer your bodies as a living sacrifice...* 1st disciples...

All *the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, & to fellowship, & to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), & to prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, & the apostles performed many miraculous signs & wonders. All the believers met together in one place & shared everything they had. They sold their property & possessions & shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day,*

met in homes for the Lord's Supper, & shared their meals with great joy & generosity; all the while praising God & enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Which is precisely why the writer of Hebrews said: **And** *let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. – Heb 10:25* When we separate ourselves from worship...when the gathered church can't be bothered to gather... choose some other devotion... assume on-line is enough...our lives take on the distorted reality of the world around us...If we aren't worshipping here, we're sure not going to offer God much of our lives out there. AW Tozer **"Without** true worship, we go about miserable." ^{w/o} true worship that connects the gathered community of disciples ^{w/} our scattered lives across the city...we go about miserable & no one knows or sees or experiences the resurrected life that's ours to share. We lament the circumstances of our world... bemoan family crises that seem intractable...shake our fists over political divisions & decisions that do more harm than good & sometimes we ask God to intervene...but the promise resides here: **2 Chron 7:14** - *If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves & pray & seek my face & turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven & will forgive their sins & restore their land.*

The resurrection of the Lamb-who-was-slain unleashes an unstoppable force that powerfully moves through this world sweeping up everything before it; bringing life & hope, healing & strength. The epicentre of this force from Easter on is God's people at worship, singing a new song - revealing a new reality - living new lives. As that happens: Out of darkness, light spills forth. Out of despair, hope arises. Out of discouragement, inspiration awakens. Out of death, life flows. The Lamb-who-was-slain suffers & triumphs to open the scroll, redeem his people & unleash us for lives of unceasing worship. Christ is alive & present ^{w/} his people & through Christ risen/ruling God draws us into worship & then out from worship as an unstoppable force that glorifies God & invites the world to join our praise. You were created & redeemed to worship the Living God!

TAKE IT HOME:

What stops you from living such that all you do (all of it – every bit – every day) is offered to the Father in worship? What needs to change?

2 Cor 10:15 – “we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”

What needs to happen for you to be unleashed?

Let's pray with that in mind...using the songs of heaven...together

"You *are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign on the earth."*

"Worthy *is the Lamb who was slaughtered — to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing."*

"Blessing *and honour and glory and power belong to the one sitting on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever."*

Amen