

Over the next five weeks, we are doing a Sunday Series as part of our 40 days of Worship we launched this last week at CPC. I hope you are joining in with our church wide 40 days of devotions on our CPC app, and we pray the spiritual practice of worship will grow in all of our lives.

It's self-evident that everyone worships something. We are compelled to express worship. Why? Because we were created to be worshippers. A relevant question for us to ask: "Who is Worthy of our Worship?" When we think of ancient forms of worship, we think of superstitious people bowing down to statues or images such as the golden calf the Israelites worshipped.

When we think of modern forms of worship, in our western world anyway, we are not inclined to bow down to a statue. But we do bow to something. We are formed by what we worship. The person, thing, or image we worship is handed the power to change and shape us. And depending on what we bow to, we can be shaped in a good way or a bad way.

When I was in India, I was exposed to Hindu forms of worship. They have upwards of 10,000 gods that people can worship. Each is represented by a statue in their temple.

In our western world, we are really not that different. Our false gods may not look like statues, but they certainly have their own look. And we are tempted every day to bow to them and be formed by them.

Which one of us has not been tempted to bow to the false god of materialism? A couple of months ago, Julie and I bought a large smart TV. It is 45 inches, we thought, "This is huge. Why would we ever consider buying something bigger than this?" Just the other day, I found myself thinking, "You know I could actually fit a 50 inch in my space." Where does that come from? God isn't against my 45 inch TV, but he is helping me to see the difference between enjoying a fun toy and bowing to it.

Which one of us hasn't been tempted to bow to the false god of our own pride and ego? We can rationalize that working 60-80 hours a week is necessary and even right for this season in our lives to get ahead, to provide for our families, etc. In some environments, we are rewarded for this kind of worship. But here is the deception, we aren't doing it for our families we are doing it for ourselves. Our kids, spouses, and our neighbors need our presence in their lives. They need our love more than our business success. You see, false gods can be deceptive. They can really look like good things; like character qualities. Even qualities we want to pass on.

It can be argued that we are tempted to bow to the false god of science and technology. We are deceived if we believe that humankind can

build a utopian society through the right government or right business leaders or the right discoveries. We think we can fix all that is wrong with the world. Throughout history, kingdoms rise and fall under their own weight, but God is in control. One day human civilization will come to a point when God will declare the end of this current age, "and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare" (2 Peter 3:10b). And it will be God, not us who will one day establish a new heaven and new earth, the true utopia we crave.

Our hearts and minds must be centered on God. The greatest commandment Jesus gives us is a call to worship. In Matthew chapter 22:37, Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Like Elijah on Mount Carmel, we are called to challenge people to choose between worshipping the God of the Bible and or worshipping the gods of our culture.

It centers our lives. I liken worshipping false gods as seeing life through a dull gray haze. But when I worship the One True God as revealed in the scriptures, I am able to see life through the bright colors of how it is supposed to be. So, let's dig into worship together for the next five weeks. Let's grow in worship, lift the haze of false gods, and learn to see life in color.

Our text is in the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation. Revelation chapter four introduces a section of the book that is a color picture of future things. The Apostle John had been given a gift to see the future of the church. In Revelation chapter 4-5 we get to see what worship will look like in heaven as the final act begins when Jesus is about to return to take his throne with him and establish a new heaven and a new earth. Through John, we get to see what worship will be like for eternity. What better place for us to dig deeper into our understanding of worship than from the vantage point of heaven.

**After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."  
(Revelation 4:1)**

So a door to a future heaven is propped open. And John hears a commanding and authoritative voice, that sounds like a trumpet. And this voice calls John and transports him spiritually into the colorful reality of a future heaven. Our future home!

**At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. (Revelation 4: 2-3)**

This throne is the symbol of God's sovereign rule and his authority and his presence. The throne means it's fixed, permanent, and unshakable, no matter what traumatic events are happening on earth in the present.

How does John describe what he sees? With colors! John says the one seated on the throne had the appearance of jasper. Jasper is crystal clear, like a diamond that could refract light into all the colors of the spectrum and also as clear as crystal to demonstrate his holiness and perfection. And red ruby, the color of blood, which makes us think of God the Son who gave his blood for us as an atonement for our sin. Then the rainbow casting shades of emerald green, the colors of creation. The rainbow is also seen as a sign of grace to represent the Holy Spirit administering grace to the world since the time of Noah. What else does John see?

**Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. (Revelation 4:4)**

Who were these 24 elders? Some scholars believe they are human representatives of the ancient church who persevered through the tribulation. They wore the white robes of righteousness and wore their crowns of good works for running the race and finishing victorious. Some say these were representatives from the 12 tribes and the 12 disciples, which means John could have seen his future self in the scene.

Other scholars see them as angels who minister to the church - righteous angels who have fought the daily battles with evil on our behalf. I don't think we are supposed to know exactly who they are. I just know that when I see this scene, it should lead me to a worship response.

**From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. (Revelation 4:5-6a)**

John continues to communicate heaven to us with pictures and sounds. It reminds me of the scene on the mountain when Moses was in God's presence, and lightning flashed, and the earth shook. Remember the setting here. This is a future picture of the beginning of final judgment that will be poured out on the earth described in chapters 6-19 of Revelation.

Seven lamps and seven spirits of God, this represents the Holy Spirit. In Revelation 1:4-5, John sends grace to the churches through God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the seven spirits or Holy Spirit. And then there is glass, clear as crystal, reflecting the holiness of God, that only a holy God has the credibility to administer judgment on rebellious, sinful people.

Out of all the fake idols feigning for our worship, we must ask the question, "Who is Worthy to receive our worship?"

### **The One Who Sits on the Throne is Worthy**

What John sees, we now see. What John knows, we now know. Whatever crazy things are happening on earth, followers of Christ have the assurance that God is on the throne. Whether we are followers of

Jesus worshiping today in Sri Lanka, or Bay Area Christians trying to love your neighbor with the love of Christ on the peninsula, these verses tell us to tremble at what God can do, not at what man can do. The One who sits on the throne is worthy to receive glory. And to glorify God is what existence is all about.

**In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Revelation 4:6b-8a**

Now John sees four very weird looking creatures, like nothing ever seen on earth. Winged animals, covered with eyes all over their bodies, even under their wings John tells us. Who are these beings? In Ezekiel 1 we read about similar creatures called cherubim. Not cherub, which we think of pudgy naked baby angels who shoot people with Cupid-like arrows. Cherubim and Seraphim are created beings who administer God's government. Four faces are powerful symbolism. The lion - speaks of power. The ox - speaks of patience. The eagle - of swiftness. The man - intelligence. And covered with eyes symbolizes wisdom, perception, discernment.

**Day and night they never stop saying:**

**"Holy, holy, holy**

**is the Lord God Almighty,'**

**who was, and is, and is to come." (Revelation 4:8)**

We will see these creatures someday. They will always be worshipping. It's their privilege, their calling, their purpose.

**Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." (Revelation 4:9-11)**

In verse eight, worship is a quartet of the four creatures. And then in verse ten, the 24 elders join in. All of this is directed toward the One who sits on the throne. The crowns they wore because of their faithful service on earth can't be compared to being in the presence of God, so they took off anything that would give them glory and turned all their attention to glorifying God. Everything was directed toward the throne. And the place was full of joy. So joyful they had to respond with singing. These beings are our example. The One who is worthy of being worshipped in heaven by them is worthy of being worshipped on earth by us.

### **The One Who is Worshipped in Heaven is Worthy**

You may have walked into worship today wondering, Does God really sit on the throne? On the throne of this world? With all the political

uncertainty, terrorism, division, social problems, and the disregard for the sanctity of life?

Does God really sit on the throne of my life? With all my difficulties, and conflicts? My struggle with sin, my failures to serve, and lead? Yes! I love the words of the hymn writer, Kittie Louise Suffield, "God is still on the throne and He will remember his own; Though trials press us and burdens distress us, He never will leave us alone; God is still on the throne, He never forsaketh His own; His promise is true, He will not forget you, God is still on the throne."

Worship lifts our perspective from earthly to heavenly. Worship takes our minds off of our problems and focuses our minds on God.

God is Worthy of Worship Because of WHO HE IS, and Jesus is Worthy of Worship Because of WHAT HE HAS DONE

Russian Orthodox priest named Alexander Men was asked in a radio interview broadcast across Russia back in the time of perestroika and glasnost, "Does one need to be a Christian, and if one does, then why?"

**"I think there is only one answer, and it as follows," he said:**

**"Man always seeks God. The normal state of man is, to some extent, to be connected with a higher power, even when the higher power in the human mind is distorted, and turned into something secular like Stalinism ... and all other isms seek some false god even if God is taken away. This turns to idol worship, but still the inner instinct of seeking God is there. ...**

**"The question is totally different when it is put this way: Why Christianity? Is it because of the sacred scriptures? No, every religion has sacred scriptures, and sometimes with a very high quality of spiritual content. Then why Christianity? Morality? Certainly. I am happy that in our society the high moral values of Christianity are accepted, but it would be totally erroneous to maintain that there are no moral values outside Christianity. Then why Christianity? Should we embrace ... a position that God is revealed and therefore can be found in any religion? No, because then the uniqueness and absolute character of Christianity will disappear. I think that nothing will prove the uniqueness of Christianity except one thing--Jesus Christ Himself."**

What separates Christians from all those who seek to be worshippers of a higher power? One thing. We have the one thing that makes our object of worship unique from all other religions and isms. We have Jesus Christ Himself. That is exactly where John takes us in living color in chapter 5

**Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" (Revelation 5:1-2)**

So, what is the scroll? Why is it sealed? If we were to read ahead in Revelation, we would find that the opening of these seals reveals a series of huge events that will shake the world. These are mysteries of God to

be revealed. Such as, why everyone wants Utopia on earth, but no one knows how to achieve it. Everyone wants an end to violence, crime, evil, and prejudice, but no one knows how to end it. The scroll of Revelation reveals that God has a different plan for bringing about true Utopia. And at the center of it all is Jesus Christ.

**But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. (Revelation 5: 3-4)**

Throughout history, there have been those who considered themselves worthy to "break the seals," to "open the scroll." Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Genghis Khan, Charlemagne, and Napoleon. Even leaders we respect such as Abraham Lincoln couldn't resolve the social and political issues. Jefferson, Franklin Roosevelt, or Martin Luther King Jr., none of these great leaders were worthy to open the scroll. No wonder John wept when he saw the future. John wept for the same reasons we weep. We long to see the world rid of sin and death. We want to see Satan vanquished. Like John, we long to see God's kingdom established on earth.

**Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." (Revelation 5: 5)**

The lion of Judah and the Root of David refer to the prophecies of the Old Testament that a savior would come from the tribe of Judah from the family of David to rule the world and put an end to pain, suffering, and sorrow. No human, no angel can redeem the universe, but there is One who can.

**Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. (Revelation 5:6)**

The body of the lamb is wounded as if it had been put to death. This is the Lamb of God, the slain redeemer of the world. The marks of his suffering and death are still there for all eternity. So, John sees the Lion of Judah, the symbol of majesty, power, and rule and authority, combined with the lamb, a symbol of meekness, innocence, and sacrifice. Lions conquer; lambs submit. Lions roar, lambs go to slaughter.

**At His first coming, he was the Lamb. At His Second Coming, He will be the Lion.**

**He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 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. (Revelation 5:7-8)**

And we see that the four creatures and the 24 elders now worship Jesus. They carry harps and bowls of incense, which are prayers of the church they present to God. Another good lesson here: Our worship should include presenting our requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving

to God. This assures me that all my prayers are heard. They are brought before the throne.

**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. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign[d] on the earth.” (Revelation 5: 9-10)**

**Who is worthy of our worship? The One Who Will Open the Scroll is Worthy**

**This reminds me of the words of Peter, “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (1 Peter 1: 18-19)**

I can't conceive of any thought that is more powerful in melting the human heart than the thought that we who deserve death have been given the gift of eternal life at the cost of the precious blood of Jesus. And it is this amazing thought that calls forth the new song of praise.

**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. 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!” 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: (one day every living thing will sing...) “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” The four living creatures said, “Amen,” (literally, “Let it be, make it happen”) and the elders fell down and worshiped. (Revelation 5:11-14)**

John sees that the appearance of the Lamb, as he moves to take the scroll, causes praise to break out from everywhere in the universe. What was wrong will be made right. The Church struggling on earth will be brought into heaven. Satan thriving on earth will be thrown into the lake of fire. And every prophecy will come to pass, every word Christ uttered will be declared true, and every prayer offered by us on behalf of the church will be answered as the seals are broken and the final act unfolds.

And this is eternity. It's one big anointed time of worship. It's what we were created to do. It's what we practice for on earth. And there will be

many things that cease on earth, once that final act unfolds. But John reminds us in living color that we will worship forever.

1. Only The One who sits on the throne is Worthy of our worship
2. The One who is worshipped by the four creatures, the elders, the myriads of angels in Heaven is Worthy of our worship.
3. And Jesus, the only one worthy to open the seals is worthy of our worship

**Kingdoms and kings rise and fall but only...The One Who is Worshipped Forever is Worthy**

I understand how hard it is to admit that we have been living in the gray areas, bowing to false substitutes that never satisfy. In this first Sunday of our Worship series, let's repent. Let's return to worshipping the one who is worthy. I will lay out a list of several tools that when used by a Revelation 4-5 worshipper are used for good in this world. But these tools have become false gods in our modern world, which have led to sadness and despair. False gods enslave. I have been praying this week, and in these 40 days at CPC, that we would become renewed worshippers, and repent for bowing to these false gods. That we would take the necessary steps to realign and worship the only one who is worthy, the God of Revelation 4-5.

Ask God to reveal if any of these tools have become idols that controls your life: Work, success, devices, image, sex, or money.

Lord, speak into our hearts. Help us to share what we are learning about worship in our small groups. Help us to bring to light how the world has formed our worship. Help us renounce those false gods and become re-formed as Revelation 4-5 worshippers who worship the one who is worthy. We ask that you allow our church glimpses of you to bring your color to our world in worship. Help us to persevere as we serve you; as we wait for your return on that glorious day when your scroll is opened, the final act unfolds, and we will be taken up to heaven to worship you in full color. Help us not us to fear. Help us to not have troubled hearts. Help us to have courage and believe it when you said, “I have overcome the world.” You have shown us that the Lion and the Lamb have triumphed. So draw us by your spirit to worship the Lion and the Lamb. Draw us today to worship the only one who is worthy. AMEN.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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