

## Revelation 5:11-14

If you took a survey of church-goers and asked them to describe their **worship experience** with a single word or phrase, you would get a variety of different answers. Many would say **positive** things like “**refreshing** for my soul” or “a **peaceful** experience.” Some might give **negative** answers too like “**dull**” or “**ordinary**.” Here at Trinity, we try to **vary** the worship experience while maintaining some **consistency** at the same time. Each **month** we use 4 different liturgies for **variety**, but every first, second, third, and fourth Sunday of the month are always the **same** for **consistency**. As we look at the vision of worship in **heaven**, which we have in our sermon text for today, we can see that there are **good reasons** for conducting our worship services the way we do. In our text for today, St. John shows us that in our **worship**, we should experience **A Taste Of Heaven**.

The Book of Revelation is a book of a series of **visions** - visions which were seen by the Apostle **John**, when he was living as in **exile** on the island of **Patmos**. Our text for today comes from one of the **earlier** visions John had. It was a vision of **heaven**. In the verses just **preceding** our text, John saw **God** seated on a **throne**, high and mighty. Around Him were four living **creatures**. These living creatures are very similar in description to the angels called **cherubim** by the prophet **Ezekiel**. Around these living creatures there were 24 **elders**. The **number** of elders is very significant, because these elders represent **all believers** of **all time**. The **Old Testament** believers are represented by the 12 tribes of **Israel**. The **New Testament** believers are represented by the 12 **apostles** - so,  $12 + 12 = 24$ .

We also note that as John sees God seated on the **throne** in the **midst** of the angels and the saints, He is holding a **scroll** which is **sealed** with seven **seals**. The saints and angels are **distressed** at first because they would like to **read** the scroll, but they can't find anyone who is worthy to **open** the seals. However, then the **Lamb** arrives - the Lamb of **God**, Jesus Christ. Only **Jesus** is worthy to **break** the seals, and to **open** the scroll. So, when the saints and angels **see** the Lamb, they start singing the **song** which is recorded for us in our reading today, “*Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!*” These words show us that worship in **heaven** is focused on the **Lamb** - the **perfect** Sacrifice - **Jesus**.

Our worship here on **earth** has the **same** focus. It's all about the **Lamb** - and that's exactly where the focus **needs** to be. We understand that without **Jesus**, we would have no **reason** to gather together for **worship**, to **sing** God's praises, and to

pray to Him. It's **Jesus** who has made all these things **possible** for us. **Without** Him, we would still be in our **sins**, and sinful human beings have **no right** to worship God in any way, shape, or form, because sin **separates** us from God. Without the **forgiveness** of sins that Jesus' **won** for us, our worship would be **useless**, and our songs and prayers would go **unheard**. Without the perfect sacrifice of Jesus we would be **hopeless** and **helpless**. But thank God that He provided His one and only **Son** to be that perfect Lamb of sacrifice. In our text for today the angels in heaven **praised** the Lamb who was slain, because His **death** paid in full the price God demanded in order to be **reconciled** with mankind. So, Jesus is not only worthy of the **angel's** praise - He is worthy of **our** praise too.

Our liturgies, or orders of worship, **reflect** that central truth - that Jesus is **worthy** of our worship, and that Jesus is the **focus** of our worship. Every Sunday, no matter which order of worship we use, our thoughts are focused on our **Savior**. At the **beginning** of our worship service we confess **our sins**, but then we focus on the **absolution** as we receive the **forgiveness** which **Jesus** won for us. In our hymns and songs of praise, **Jesus** is the one we sing about. When we hear the **Scripture readings**, and especially the **Gospel**, we hear the voice of **Jesus** speaking to us. And **again** in the **sermon**, **Jesus** is at the center of every message. On **communion Sundays**, like **this** one, we have an **extra special** way to focus on **Jesus**. In the sacrament, **Jesus'** body and blood are **given** to us - bringing us a very **personal** assurance that our sins have been **forgiven**.

In addition, not only is every **worship service** designed to focus on our Savior, but the entire **church year** revolves around the life of **Jesus**, and on the way we live our lives **for** Jesus. Truly, the way we worship as Christians brings us **A Taste Of Heaven**, because just like the **angels**, our worship proclaims, "**Worthy is the Lamb**," week after week, and year after year.

Hear once again the **song** which the angels sang in our text, "*Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive **power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!***" After the **angels** finished singing, the Apostle John heard a song from **every** creature in **heaven**, and on the **earth**, and **under** the earth - and on the **sea**, and everything in **them** - and I want you to notice that **their** song focused on Jesus **too**. They sang, "*To him who sits on the **throne** and to the **Lamb** be **praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!***" Both songs are songs of **praise**. Both songs are focused on the **Lamb**. And that's what true worship is meant to do - to give **praise** to the **Lamb** of God.

I think the word “**praise**” is sometimes a bit misunderstood. Some people think that praising God is just throwing your hands up in the air and shouting “**Hallelujah**” or “**Amen.**” But praising God has to be much **more** than that. We need to recognize that praising God involves not only our **words**, but also our **actions**. We praise God when we lift up His **works** and proclaim to others all the wonderful things He has **done**. We praise God when we proclaim the **Good News**, that Jesus is our only **Savior** from sin. **Praising** God and **proclaiming** His mercy and love go hand-in-hand.

I’m very **conscious** of that when I put together the various elements of each worship service. **Everything** needs to focus on **Jesus** and what He has **done** for us. So, even though the hymns we sing might not always be our **favorites**, and they might not even be **easy** to sing, we need to remember that it’s the **message** which is most **important**, and it’s the **message** that we need to **proclaim** - and that includes **all** of us. Sometimes we use the excuse, “I **can’t** sing, or “I don’t sing very **well**” so we can remain **silent** when the hymns are being sung. But, God knows **exactly** how our voices sound, because He’s the one who **gave** us the voice we have - and He wants us to **use** it. May all of us join together to use our voices to **proclaim** in our **hymns**, in our **prayers**, and in **all** of our worship, the wonderful things our God has **done** for us, because when that **happens**, our worship becomes **A Taste Of Heaven** for us.

And finally, after the saints and angels sang **their** praise to the Lamb, we read that “*the four living creatures said, ‘**Amen,**’ and the elders fell down and worshiped.*” The Greek verb form which the apostle uses here could also be translated, the four living creatures **kept on** saying Amen. In other words, their worship wasn’t just a **one shot** deal - it **continued on**. That word, Amen, is a very **important** word in our worship. It’s is a word of **certainty** - a word of **confidence**. Contrary to popular belief it **doesn’t mean** the **end**. But rather, it means that we know for **sure** that everything God has told us in His Word is **true**. We worship God knowing that the things we do for Him are **not** built on things that are **variable** and **shifting** - like human **thoughts** and **emotions**. Our work for the Lord is based on the rock-solid **truth** of **God’s Word**. Our **hymns** are **not** filled with wishful **thinking**, but rather, they express **truths** that are **certain** because they come from the **Bible**. My sermons aren’t filled with **my ideas**, but rather, they are filled with what **God says** in His Word. What a **blessing** it is that in our worship we have something we can **rely** on - something to which we can say “**Amen,**” in a world that so often is **uncertain**.

What a **blessing** it is to **worship together**. What a **blessing** it is to participate in **orders** of worship that gives us **A Taste Of Heaven**, as we focus on **Jesus**, the Lamb who was **slain**; and as we give Him our **praise** by **singing** and **speaking**, with the **confidence** that His Word is always **true**. Amen.