

Text: Rev. 5:9, 12

Title: "Of what is the Lamb worthy?"

Time: 7/16/2017 am

Place: NBBC

Intro: Two of our favorite hymns here at church are "Like A River Glorious" and "Who Is On the Lord's Side?" They, together with others, like "I Gave My Life for Thee" and "Take My Life and Let It Be," were written by a sister in Christ who lived in the 19th century named Frances Havergal.

Frances was the daughter of a minister in the Church of England. [By the way, I saw an article this past week that explained how the Church of England has come up with a religious ceremony that affirms the transition of a person from one gender to another. God gave us baptism to signify the transition from our old life of slavery to sin to our new life of forgiveness from sin. Well, this "church" now celebrates a transition into deeper darkness and harm.]

In Frances' day, the paganism of our day was unknown in the Church of England, and Frances had a strong Christian upbringing. She was known to have memorized the Psalms, Isaiah, and most of the New Testament. She was proficient in Greek and Hebrew, and she was a gifted musician. She played the piano, and her voice was in demand as a concert soloist.

Frances suffered cheerfully with poor health, and she went home to be with the Lord at the early age of 42.

I mention Frances by way of introduction this morning, because her life demonstrated that she understood what Revelation 5 is all about. Frances Havergal understood the wor-

thiness of her Savior. She called her song, "Take My Life," a song of consecration, and in it she spoke of what her worthy Savior was worthy of:

"Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee."

We have spent a couple of weeks in Revelation 5 focused on the heavenly question we find in the passage, "Who is Worthy?" The Lamb is worthy. But before we move on to chapter 6, I thought it would be helpful for us to pause and ponder this chapter's teaching regarding just what exactly the Lamb is worthy of. What makes heaven different from earth is that in heaven they know not only who is worthy, but also what He is worthy of in a practical way. I think our passage emphasizes two simple things in this regard.

I. The Lamb is worthy to receive (v. 12).

Ill: It was my wife's birthday this past week, and one of the things I have learned from nearly 28 years of marriage is that my wife is worthy to receive a gift on her birthday.

Prior to our coming to New Hampshire, we lived in South Carolina for 5 years and Texas for 2 or 3 years before that. Oddly enough, in both Texas and South Carolina, we saw very good friends who were professing Christian couples get a divorce.

I can remember the friend I had in Texas who went through that telling me one year that he had forgotten his wife's birthday and that he did not think that was very important. As it turned out, it may have been very important indeed.

Appl: Wives are worthy to receive the love and appreciation of their husbands, and the Lamb is worthy to receive some things from His bride, the church, as well. They are listed for us in this verse. Ultimately, the Lamb receives these things in full from His heavenly Father and the heavenly host who serve Him perfectly. He receives them from us in the sense that we give Him credit through our praise for His possession of them. On the other hand, He does not receive them from us when we live as though we do not believe that He possesses these things.

1. The Lamb is worthy to receive power. We noticed last week that this special word for *lamb* tells us that this Lamb is a little-lamb. We said that part of our Savior's worthiness was His perfect willingness to become completely helpless or powerless. He did that by submitting the power He originally had to the will of His Father.

But now the Father has exalted Him again. The Little-Lamb is about to powerfully and completely crush His enemies with His own power.

Appl: So do our lives demonstrate that the Lamb is worthy to receive power? Have we yielded to the power of His Spirit, which makes us more like Christ? Or is that Spirit's power quenched and grieved in our lives? Does our prayer life ascribe to the Lamb any power? Is our witness for Him to a lost world dependent upon His power? Do we face each day trusting His power, or are we content to attempt to get through day after day with our own power?

The spirit of fear is the opposite of this spirit of power (2 Tim. 1:7). The Lamb gives us the spirit of power, and He is worthy to receive praise for power from us. We give Him that when we refuse to fear in light of His power.

2. He is worthy to receive riches. Beginning with his birth in a stable in Bethlehem, Jesus led a life of humble circumstances. His first cradle was a manger. His trade was carpentry. He once explained to a would-be follower that the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has no place to lay His head. He died even stripped of His garments, for which soldiers cast lots.

But the Father has changed all that, for the Lamb is worthy to receive riches. He created all things, and by Him all things consist, and for Him all things were made (Col. 1:16). The Lamb of humble circumstances is about to take possession of the entire universe, for He is worthy of riches.

Appl: But do our personal financial priorities demonstrate that the Lamb is worthy to receive riches? What comes naturally to our flesh is the idea that we are worthy to have more riches than we do. Have we thought about how He made everything and owns everything and so everything we have is merely a gracious gift from Him? Have we faithfully given back to His work a portion of what He first gave to us? Have we found that it is more blessed to give than to receive when it comes to riches? The need of our ministry is our opportunity to do so.

3. He is worthy to receive wisdom. When the Lamb ministered on earth, few thought He was wise. He was demeaned and crucified as a deranged blasphemer. The apostle Paul explains that the word of the cross is foolishness to the perishing.

But the Father will demonstrate in the Lamb that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men. He is worthy to receive wisdom.

Appl: So do we live as though the Lamb is worthy to receive wisdom? Do we confess that He knows best, that His way is perfect, and that His word is trustworthy and must be obeyed? Or does our neglect of His truth betray our true belief – that the Lamb is unwise and that we know better than He what is best?

4. He is worthy to receive strength. We have seen already that the Lamb is worthy to receive power, and this idea of His worthiness to receive strength is similar. The difference intended here seems to be that the Lamb is worthy to receive strength against His enemies.

Psalm 142 seems to be a good description of the Lamb in the Garden of Gethsemane, first defenseless against His persecutors, but then strengthened by the Father for final victory.

Appl: Do we believe in the strength of the Lamb to defeat His enemies? Do we say He is stronger than our sinful habits and addictions? Is He stronger than a world that hates and persecutes us? Is He stronger than the legions of demons and the adversary that oppose us?

Ill: Remember Luther's counsel, "The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him; His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him." Luther gave the Lamb credit for strength. Do we?

5. He is worthy to receive honor. The idea behind this word *honor* is *the recognition of true value*. We honor something when we value it correctly and treat it with the respect that its true value deserves. When the Lamb was on the earth, he was despised and rejected of men. He was not honored because His true value was not recognized.

But God the Father has now exalted Him, giving Him the name that is above every other name, at which everything shall bow (Phil. 2:9-10).

Appl: Have we valued Him correctly and treated Him accordingly? Do we honor the Savior? Do we treat Him with respect? When it comes to honoring authority, obedience is always the result. "Honor thy father and thy mother" is closely linked to "Obey your parents in the Lord." When we recognize the true value of our parents as God-given authority, we desire to obey them. The same must be true in our honoring of the Lord. Disobedience is the worst form of dishonor.

6. He is worthy to receive glory. Isaiah explains the way in which the Lamb was deprived of glory on this earth: "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (53:2-4).

In Revelation 5 the Lamb is glorified – not despised, not rejected, not hid from, not without esteem, not condemned.

Appl: Is the Lamb glorified in our lives? Paul said, "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Is that our desire? Is that our practice? Do we think of how to glorify Him in all the details of our lives, or do we seek to live for the glory of self?

7. He is worthy to receive blessing. The Lamb endured the cursing of a sinful world. The Pharisees intimated that He was an illegitimate child on one occasion, and on another that He was a part of the house of Beelzebub. They yelled for His crucifixion. They mocked Him on the cross. Few sought to bless Him.

Now exalted to the Father's right hand, the universe in one great voice seeks to give Him a blessing with their unanimous worship.

Appl: Have we come this morning to receive a blessing for ourselves, or to ensure our Savior receives the blessing? We should want to be a blessing to Him as we worship together this morning.

Appl2: The Lamb is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. What are we worthy to receive? Rom. 6:23 tells us what we are worthy to receive when it says, "The wages of sin is death."

Ill: Every once in a while, a brother will respond to the question, "How are you doing?" with the clever phrase, "Better than I deserve."

That is correct. Every moment we spend by the grace of God, not tormented by the flames of hell, is a moment that we do not deserve, something of which we are not worthy. But those moments are ours because of grace. May God give us victory over the temptation to believe in our own worthiness, and to confess instead only the Lamb's .

II. The Lamb is worthy to open (v. 9).

Conclusion: The Lamb is worthy to open the book of God's final judgment upon sin. He is worthy to do this because He first died for that sin. In dying for sin, He has redeemed us to God and made us kings and priests. He has demonstrated what His death can do for the sinner. If you reject that work of grace in your life through unbelief, He is worthy to judge you for that sin. Today, He asks to be your worthy Savior, not your Judge. Will you trust Him?

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching