

TEXT STUDY – Revelation 5:11-14

Introduction: I'm not much of a golf fan. I really don't have the time or the money to play it. Maybe I will when I retire. I did watch some of the Masters Golf Tournament last weekend. I wasn't able to catch the end of it but I figured that Phil Mickelson would win it. One story I read said that he was a worthy winner of the Masters. That was mainly referring to his dedication to his wife's battle with cancer as opposed to Tiger Woods and his sorted affairs with other women. Yes, Phil Mickelson is a worthy winner in my eyes too not only for his golfing ability but for his character as a person. Jesus our Savior is worthy too. He is worthy of far more praise and unending worship as the one who did much, much more than win a golf tournament. Jesus won our salvation in heaven itself. John's vision of heaven sees Jesus in his picturesque role as the Lamb of God. We would agree with the angels in heaven - **WORTHY IS THE LAMB WHO WAS SLAIN.** He is worthy 1) to receive praise in heaven, and he is worthy 2) to receive praise on earth.

I. To receive praise in heaven

- After Jesus' words to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, the Apostle John was invited to take a glimpse into the throne room of God. What he saw was God the Father seated on his rainbow-circled throne which was surrounded by what looked like a sea of glass. Around the throne were the 24 elders and the four living creatures. John also saw a Lamb who was slain standing in the center of the throne. He received a scroll that contained the future, and this scroll was sealed with seven seals.
- It is at this point that John heard the four living creatures and the elders sing a song of praise to the Lamb who was worthy to open the seals of the scroll. John writes, **“And they 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 men for God 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 on the earth.’”**
- Let's remember that John is writing these words to Christians who had their property confiscated or were driven from their homes. Some Christians were even being put to death. They were being severely persecuted, yet they are referred to as priests and kings reigning even while on earth in the peace and joy of forgiveness and the sure hope of future glory in heaven with Christ their risen and exalted Savior.
- Then thousands upon thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand angels encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. Let's picture this scene – the Father is on his throne and Jesus the Lamb is standing there too and they are encircled by the four living creatures probably cherubim or higher ranking angels. Then came the circle of 24 elders, the 12 patriarchs and the 12 apostles symbolizing the Old and New Testament Church. Finally the millions of regular angels formed the final circle. And the angels were focused on the Lamb who was slain.
- Why would the angels care about Jesus by praising his worthiness? He's not their Savior. They were made holy. The angels in heaven were created holy and stayed holy when Satan and the evil angels fell. God confirmed them in their holiness. They are forever holy. They do not need a Savior from sin. So why would they care about Jesus? Remember that the angels serve us. The Bible says, **“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?”**
- The angels were created by God to serve us. They rejoice when good things happen to us, even as they are sent by God to protect us and keep us safe. But their real joy is in our salvation. Their real joy was watching Jesus carry out our salvation through his perfect life, his death and his glorious resurrection. The angels' real joy is likewise witnessing our conversion from unbelief to faith through the work of the Holy Spirit and his saving gospel. Jesus said, **“I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”**
- John sees the millions of angels praising the Lamb because he carried out our salvation. As our resurrected Savior he has again resumed the full and constant use of his divine power and glory as God yet remains true man. Jesus deserves the praise he receives from the angels. He is worthy of all power and wealth with everything in the universe under his control. Jesus is worthy of wisdom and strength, that is, the complete use of his divine omniscience and omnipotence for our good.
- Jesus is worthy of all honor, glory and praise. Jesus receives the praise he deserves in heaven. That's what makes heaven such a wonderful place. There is no sin and sorrow, which is true, but there is also every creature and being in heaven giving Jesus the praise he deserves. It's what we were created to do. It's like seeing the church packed and overflowing every Sunday with everyone singing God's praises in perfect harmony but in even more glorious splendor than anything we could duplicate here on earth. It's the perfect church service all the time in the very presence of the Lamb our Savior Jesus Christ.

Transition: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. He is worthy to receive praise in heaven, the praise he receives from the angels. He is also worthy to receive praise on earth.

II. To receive praise on earth

- John's vision is of heaven and the worthy praise that Jesus receives. But in John's vision he does also hear the praise that Jesus receives from those on earth. The Apostle describes that praise in our text as coming from **"every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them."** All creation praises Jesus and the Father as well. John tells us what he heard them saying or singing, **"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever!"**
- We would agree that angels in heaven praise Father, Son, and Holy Spirit too. We would also agree that human beings, at least true believers, praise Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But how do animals and inanimate things like the sun, moon and stars praise the Triune God? The Psalmist writes, **"Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars."**
- The Psalmist continues, **"Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, young men and maidens, old men and children."**
- As God's creation fulfills its purpose it brings glory and praise to God. As God's created world brings joy and pleasure to mankind it resounds in praise to God. Have you ever watched a beautiful sunset or strolled through a gorgeous countryside or hiked up a mountain trail or even seen pictures of these things? You are led to praise the Lord. But even the creation itself is subjected by sin. Plants and animals die. Our environment is polluted and abused. Even this wonderful world must be liberated from the effects of sin and brought into glory.
- Paul writes in Romans 8, **"The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."** God will create a new heavens and a new earth to serve as our eternal home and creation itself will join in the perfect praise of all believers.
- But with these words John is certainly encouraging our praise to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. Are we fulfilling our purpose in life, which like the sun, moon, stars, and all creation is to praise our God? It's not our purpose in life to find a job, raise a family, be a good friend and a model citizen and help those in need. Those things we do as Christians whose sole purpose is to give glory and praise to God. Every minute of every day at home, work, school or out on the town we were created to give praise to God.
- I don't have to tell you how many times we fail to give praise to God. We become very selfish and self-centered. We're frustrated with our day because we didn't accomplish what we wanted to accomplish not for God but for ourselves. We found all sorts of ways to sin because somehow we sinfully reasoned that it would make us feel better. How wrong we were. It only added to our guilt and shame.
- But we are still filled with praise, despite our sin, because the Lamb was slain literally slaughtered. Jesus was slaughtered on the cross. His blood was shed because of our sin as the payment for our sin. The empty tomb confirms what we believe. Paul writes, **"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."** Jesus was burdened with our sin so that we through faith in him are holy and righteous in God's sight. There is not the slightest trace of any sin. Worthy is the Lamb of our praise
- Now comes the praise part. Fulfill your purpose in life – give praise to the Lamb who was slain. Was your day really that frustrating if you faithfully put in your time at work as a Christian and demonstrated your love for your family as a Christian spouse or parent? And most important of all, was your day really that frustrating if you took the time to grow in your faith by reading your Bible and then spent some time talking to God in prayer? To this kind of praise John heard the four living creatures say "Amen" and saw the elders fall down and worship.

Conclusion: Whether or not Phil Mickelson is a worthy winner of the Masters could be debated. I'm sure he has his many faults too, but he does seem to be worthy of his great accomplishment as far as I can tell. Jesus is far more worthy and deserves every bit of praise and worship as the Lamb who was slain for our salvation. He is worthy to receive praise in heaven, and he is worthy to receive praise on earth. May we praise him now though it is imperfect and falls far short of the praise he deserves. But may we also look forward to the perfect praise we will finally be able to give in heaven with all God's holy angels. Amen.