

Watermark: A Church of Worshippers

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Date: 22 November 2020

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[0 : 01] I don't know if you've ever thought about why it is that we actually worship. Why do we come to, for those of us that are Christians, why do we come to church and engage in corporate worship?

And when I say worship, I mean more than just singing songs. I mean the whole family worship encounter. Why is it that we come and we take communion together and we listen to God's word open and we pray prayers together and we sing songs of adoration and devotion to who God is? So, as we look at the book of Revelation, there's worship after worship after worship happening. And the passage we're going to look at today is going to give us just one of many reasons why it's imperative that those that call ourselves followers of Jesus are those who know how to worship. And so in the book of Revelation, chapter 13, the apostle John has these two visions. And it's these visions of these beastly looking creatures.

In fact, it's actually these, the first one is verses 1 to 10 and then verse 11 to 18. Now if you know anything about the book of Revelation, remember we worked through it last year as a church, the book of Revelation is full of imagery.

[1 : 14] It's not meant to be taken literally. And these images of these two beasts are actually two sides or two faces or two facets of Satan and his work.

Remember in chapter 12, Satan is called the deceiver. And John has these two visions of this beastly looking creature that are two masks or two faces of who Satan is and what he's doing in the world.

And in the first one, the first vision of this beast is a picture of Satan who is going about ravaging the world and causing chaos and tyranny and fear in the world.

Look at verses 2 with me. He's described as a leopard and a bear and a lion. And Satan has given this beast power and throne and authority.

And in verse 3, he says that the whole earth marveled and followed this beast and worshipped it. In verse 7, this talks about how it's allowed to make war on the saints and conquer them.

[2 : 24] And authority is given to this beast of every tribe and nation and language and tongue. In other words, John has this vision of this beastly creature. And it's a creature that is given power and authority.

And it causes chaos in the world and fear in the world. And it promises safety and security. It gives a false promise of safety and security for those that swear allegiance to it.

Okay? And so while John has this vision of these beasts, the purpose of these beasts is to do two things. To one, to destroy the faith of God's people.

And two, to usurp or steal worship towards itself. Okay? And so this first beast does that by bringing chaos and fear and distraction on the earth.

And it tries to terrorize people and usurp allegiance and worship that way. Okay? But look at verse 10. Look at how John calls God's people to respond.

[3 : 22] In the face of this opposition and persecution and fear of what the future is going to be like, God's people are called to do what? God's people are called to endure and for faith.

He says here in verse 10, this is a call for the endurance and the faith of the saints. Look at the second image or vision that John has in verse 11. In the second image, John has this vision of this beastly-like creature.

But this is not a creature that is full of power and strength. It's a beast that speaks like a dragon. And yet when John looks at it, it looks like a lamb.

Now, in the book of Revelation, the lamb is always a picture of Jesus, right? Remember, Jesus is the lamb of God who was slain for the sins of the world. Here, John has a vision of this creature that

wants to destroy the faith of God's people and usurp worship, steal worship away from God's people.

And the way he does it is by acting like a counterfeit savior, a Jesus that will lay down his life for people, that will promise you everything that you're looking for.

[4 : 30] And look at how John describes it. Look at verse 1. He says, I saw this beast rising. Sorry, verse 11. I saw this beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

And it enticed worship for the beast. Look at verse 14. It tells us that this counterfeit Jesus does signs and wonders and miracles in order to deceive those who live on the earth.

But not only that, verse 16 tells us why he does it. One of the ways that this counterfeit Jesus elicits worship is by promising prosperity and abundance to those that seek safety and refuge in it.

Okay? Look at verse 16. It says, And that is what he's saying is John has these two visions.

These two sides of the activity of Satan in the world that is bent on destroying God's people and stealing worship that's deserved for God. One of these visions is of this creature that comes with strength and power and might.

[5 : 43] He looks like a lion and a leopard and a bear. And he tries to terrorize people into finding safety and security in it. The other one comes and he looks like Jesus and he promises access to financial markets, access to wealth, prosperity, and abundance.

He says, If you come and find allegiance in me, I will allow you to trade and buy and sell. I will give you prosperity and abundance. Okay? And so the one beast tries to secure worship for itself with fear.

The other one through seduction and promises of blessing and prosperity. You see what's going on here? You following? Okay. Now what does John do here?

What is the response? Actually, sorry, in verse 18, John says, This calls for the saints to have wisdom. And so the one hand, God's people need faith and endurance.

On the other hand, God's people need wisdom. Where are God's people going to find the faith and endurance that we need to defy the work of Satan and to stay steadfast in who God is?

[6 : 50] Where are we going to find the wisdom to know how it is to remain faithful to Jesus in the midst of everything that's going on in the world? Where are we going to find these things? Look at what John says here.

Look at chapter 14. In chapter 14, John invites us to be people of worship. In the midst of the chaos that's going on in the world, John has another vision.

In fact, John sees behind the curtain. In a sense, John sees the end for which the story of the world, how it all ends. And what he sees is a vision of God on the throne, of Jesus Christ the Lamb, and he sees God's people around the throne in worship.

And what John's doing here in chapter 14 is John isn't giving us an alternative. He's inviting us to come and be people who find our hope and our identity in who God is, seated on the throne, by worshipping Him.

John is inviting us, giving us another alternative to being terrorized by the fear-mongering of Satan and being seduced by the false reality and to find our hope and our identity and our peace in who God is and to worship Him on the throne.

[8 : 06] Look at what he says here in chapter 14, verse 1. He says, John tells us that in the midst of everything that's going on in the world, the best thing that God's people can do is to be those who know how to work.

Friends, the last two years have been crazy years in our world, right? Especially for those of us in Hong Kong. Everything's been torn, turned upside down.

Nothing is like what it used to be 18 months ago. Two years ago, who would have predicted the world would look like what it does today? And who knows when it's going to end and when things are going to go back to how we previously knew them, if ever.

The world is in a crazy state. And what that means is that followers of Jesus need to find both a profound wisdom, but also a faith and an endurance.

In the midst of all the craziness that's going on, followers of Christ, God's people, need to find this wisdom and this endurance and this faith. And where are we going to find it? John tells us that we find it as we fix our eyes on Christ and who he hears as we give ourselves to be people of worship.

[9 : 36] John has this vision that despite what's going on in the world, he sees how the story ends and it ends with God's people around the throne in worship. And as we read the rest of the book of Revelation, what is it that they're singing?

Well, we're told. They're singing things like, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come. They're singing things like, Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power and praise for you created all things and by your will they existed.

They're singing songs like, Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever and ever and ever.

God's people are those who in the midst of everything that's going on have managed to fix their eyes on a greater reality. Are the awesomeness and the supremacy and the infinite worth of who God is.

John's giving these Christians a vision of what's ultimate reality and what's ultimately true. And he's inviting them, he's inviting us to defy the advances of Satan by being people of worship.

[10 : 59] Do you remember that old hymn? Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face. And the things of the earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

Friends, that's what John's inviting us to do. He's inviting us to turn our eyes in the midst of political uncertainty, economical uncertainty, relational uncertainty, vocational uncertainty.

In the midst of everything that's going on, John is inviting us to fix our eyes on Jesus. To turn and fix our eyes upon him. To look full in his wonderful face.

And to find the hope and the wisdom and the endurance and the faith that we need. Worship does a couple of things for us. I want to just highlight three or four and then we're going to go back into a time of singing.

Worship firstly, it reminds us of what's ultimately true. You know, every single day we are told a hundred times a day that our hope and our identity, our security and our peace is found in the things around us.

[12 : 07] Every day we're being told that to fix our eyes on our bank accounts, on political certainty, on our jobs and the things around us. Worship reminds us that all the money in the world, all the security in the world, all the best vaccines in the world are not going to add to your life one single day.

Because your life is found in Christ. Every day, friends, we are told that you are the center of your world and that you've got to make much of yourself. And as we fix our eyes upon Christ, we are told that we are not the center of the world, but there is a sovereign God who rules and reigns.

We are reminded of what's true. Worship reminds us of where our identity is found. Every day we are told that our identity is found in things like our work, in what we accomplish, in our bank accounts, in relationships, and for Hong Kongers in our children, right?

Worship, when we fix our eyes on God, it reminds us that our identity, who we are, is not found in those things around us, but fundamentally that if you're a Christian, you're in Christ, you belong to Him, you've been purchased with His blood.

That Christ has brought us out of hell, not with silver or gold or any perishable currency or anything that the stock market can crash. You belong to Him and you've been secured by the infinite, eternally valid blood of Jesus.

[13 : 23] Worship reminds us that our identity is found, is rock-solid secure, because it's found in Christ and who He is. Friends, worship reminds us who we belong to.

I don't know if you saw that in verse 17. Satan comes and he says, I promise you access to the markets and financial wealth and security, if only you'll take my name, if you'll have my name written on your forehead or on your hand.

But in chapter 14, John says that the saints are those that have the name of God written on them. When we come and we fix our eyes on who God is, when we worship God by taking communion and praying and listening to God's word and singing songs of adoration, it reminds us whose we are, who we belong to, that our name is written eternally in the book of life, that our name is engraved on the nail-scarred hands of Jesus, that we are His, that we belong to Him.

But fourthly, do you know what worship does? Worship doesn't just do that for us. It does that for one another. You see, one of the reasons why we don't just worship individually, we don't just worship in our bedrooms.

One of the reasons we come together Sunday after Sunday and we take communion together and we pray together and we listen to God's word and we sing together is so that we can remind and strengthen one another.

[14 : 40] Friends, worship isn't just for ourselves, it's actually for the body of Christ. It's for our church family. As we declare the glory of God in song, as we proclaim the mercy of God in preaching, as we portray the faithfulness of God in prayer, as we listen to the grace of God in His word, as we remember the grace of God and the sacraments and the bread and the juice that's broken, we proclaim to one another, you belong to Jesus.

Your identity isn't found in Jesus. Our hope, my hope, your hope, is in the risen Christ. Friends, worship is actually warfare. It's a battle for your soul.

It's a battle for your heart. And every week we're being told by a thousand different voices, whether on social media or in the MTR line or on the front page of the Wall Street Journal or the New York Times, that our identity and our hope and our security is found in things around us.

And every Sunday and every day during the week, as we open up our Bibles and read and pray, we're actually doing battle and we're being reminded, we're being reminded of what's true.

We're being told that our hope and our identity is in the risen Lamb, the one who died, the one who rose again, the one who's seated on the throne, the one who invites us to come and worship Him.

[16 : 02] Can I ask you to stand? And we're going to continue to sing songs of devotion and worship to our God. Maybe I can ask you if you're comfortable just to open up your hands.

There's nothing super spiritual about opening your hands, but it's a sign of saying, God, I'm open, as opposed to being crossed and closed. If you're comfortable to close your eyes, friends, how are you doing this morning?

Friends, some of us come and we may be feeling weary and need deep soul rest. Some of us come this morning, we feel useless and we need a Redeemer.

Some of us come this morning, we feel like we failed again and again, and we need mercy, we need forgiveness. Some of us are weak and we need empowering grace.

Friends, some of us feel unloved or unlovable. We need the loving arms of a good and gracious King. Some of us have been seduced by the lies and allures of this world.

[17 : 14] We need to see the beauty of Jesus again. Some of us feel battered, afflicted, worn out, and we need rescue. Friends, some of us feel spiritually dry.

Some of us feel hard. Some of us feel apathetic, and we need the Holy Spirit to come and minister to us and remind us of who we are in Christ. Friends, this morning, God invites us to worship Him, to turn our eyes upon Jesus, to look full in His wonderful face, so that the things of this earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and His grace.

What does the sun always mean? What does the sun take to worship Him either?

He never ████ the flesh. He never entrada vor me, he never thought baby prophet, by hisorigine. It would be open to us here today. That come from me to a nanny hall when I invest in God. We need seis and four days with our life. Ascii █ man has expressed as miscynial ran because of his love handwriting.