

November 25, 2018

Revelation 5:1-10

A lion or a lamb? You're facing your worst enemy. You're in the biggest jam of your life. Which would you rather have as your Champion? ... facing your enemy ... fighting for you ... speaking up for you? A lion or a lamb? Sounds a bit silly, doesn't it? On the one hand, Mary's little lamb whose fleece was white as snow. On the other hand, the mighty lion, the hunter, the King of the Jungle. Which of those two do you want as your Savior - the King of the Jungle? Or Mary's little lamb?

Today we see both! [lesson] God is on his throne in heaven. He has a scroll in his hand. On that scroll is the future of the world. Whoever holds that scroll holds the future in his hands. Whoever opens the scroll is master of the future with control over good and evil, blessing and trouble, life and death. An angel shouts out: **“Who is worthy to open the book and break its seals?”** It looked as if there was no one up to the task - no one in heaven, no one on earth, no one under the earth. No angel, no man or woman, not even the Great Pretender, NO ONE.

Then one of the elders before God speaks up: **“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.”** This isn't the roaring lion out to devour you and me. This isn't the lion we're supposed to run from. No, this is the Lion of Judah who crushed that other lion's head. This is Christ the King who fought the devil and put him in his place, who took Satan's best shot and stands as winner today. This is Jesus who faced death, who swallowed death and stood back up again. This is Jesus - free from death, strong and faithful, right by God. Yes, this Lion is worthy, this Lion has what it takes to hold the future of the world.

But then, just like that, the lion is gone. The picture changes. Now, instead of the mighty Lion, we see Mary's little Lamb, looking like it's been killed. And what does this Lamb do? He takes the scroll from God's hand. How can the Lamb be master of the world? How can the Lamb hold the future in his hands? Well, who is this Lamb? Our lesson doesn't tell us. Instead our lesson shows us. The elders and angels in heaven bow down and

worship him just as they bowed down and worshiped God the Father. They treat him as God because he is the Son of God, Jesus, the Lamb of God. And what makes this Lamb worthy, especially worthy? Listen to heaven's choir: **“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain.”**

Doesn't make sense, does it? The Lamb is worthy to hold the future, to open up the future of the world ... because he was slain. Doesn't make sense, unless What is our great malady? our great problem? The One we need to be afraid of? We might think it's Satan, the devil, the master of evil. If Satan were our biggest problem, who would be the perfect Champion for us? The Lion! The Lion of Judah who triumphed over Satan, who crushed the devil's head. But the Lion of Judah gets only passing attention, then the Lamb takes over center stage. What is our greater malady, our problem greater than the master of evil? It's our broken relationship with God. Our rebellion against God. Our ignoring God. The way that we have mistreated God's family with our coldness, cruelty, selfishness. We might pretend that none of that matters ... pretending that our good is good enough, that our bad shouldn't matter ... pretending that if we're happy with ourselves, God should be happy with us too. But God doesn't work that way, and God doesn't have to work that way. Because of our sin, our relationship with God was broken. We weren't just going through a rough patch, trying to work things out with God. No, we had gone our own way; we had lined ourselves up with the damned. Because the wages of sin is death, there was a price on our heads.

Lined up with the damned, with a price on our heads - maybe not a great time to face the Lion of God. That's where the Lamb stepped in for us. The Lord lined Jesus up as the damned in place of us. The LORD laid on him the iniquity of us all, putting all our sin, all our guilt on Jesus. He paid the price on our heads. With his blood, he bought us. With his blood, he bought us out of judgment. With his blood, he set you free from death for life with God.

That's why the Lamb takes hold of the scroll. You are his. The world is his. The future is his. He's earned the right to open up that scroll, to open up the future. Now, as he unrolls that scroll, as he opens up the future -

letting loose good and evil, letting loose trouble and blessing, letting loose life and death - what do we get to know? That Lamb who was slain has the heart, he has earned the right, he has what it takes to set your future up with blessing and with life. No matter what evil, no matter what trouble, no matter what death are let loose in this world, the Lamb has what it takes to be your champion. Yes, he looks like he was killed; he was killed. But that's not his weakness; that's his strength. He took the world's best shot and came out alive. He took God's best shot and set you right with God. With the Lamb, you have the Champion you need.

So Lion or Lamb? Let's look at it another way. Back to the beginning. God has hold of the scroll that holds the future. Who has what it takes to hold the future, to unroll that scroll and open up the future? First, we see the Lion of Judah who has triumphed over the Master of Evil. But then the Lamb takes his place center stage. What did I say about that switch? It doesn't make sense, unless ... unless we know how God wants to work in the world.

God could have put our future ... he could have put the future of his church into the hands of the Lion. Jesus could do his work as Lion, growling, roaring, stalking and destroying. How does that sound? Instead of growling and roaring, instead of stalking and destroying ... instead God puts our future into the hands of the Lamb who bought us with his life. God prefers to work with us, to work with the world through a Lamb instead of a Lion.

Not just any lamb, a supercharged Lamb. This Lamb has seven horns and seven eyes. This Lamb is no weakling. He has the full power of God. But what do you see him doing with his power? Throughout the world he has the Spirit of God whispering and working his Word and Promise - convicting, convincing, calling, converting people around the world to follow the Lamb. And here, the Lamb sets you up to be his kingdom and priests before God. Instead of under God's judgment, you rule with him. Instead of cut off from God, you get to approach God and work hand-in-hand with God. Instead of sent away empty-handed, you get to share the blessings of heaven; God gives you the riches of heaven to share with the world! With the Lamb,

you aren't just sheep; you rule with Christ!

So Lion or Lamb? We don't have to choose. With Jesus we have both! With Jesus we have the Champion we need! Amen.