

Sermon Series: Finding the Perfect Gift**Sermon Title: The Gift of Worship****Sermon Text: Revelation 4:9-5:1-14 and Matthew 2:1-11****Sermon Presenter: Pastor Larry**

Sermon Summary: This message looks at the gift of worship by examining two worship experiences in the Bible. One takes place on earth and the other in heaven. We'll be reading a portion of Revelation chapter 4 and 5, which is one of my favorite passages in all of the Bible, because it gives us such an awesome glimpse into heaven, and then we will end our message with the remainder of Revelation chapter 5 which gives great insight into the elements of worship. In between we will read a passage from Matthew's Gospel which gives the story of the wise men seeking, finding and worshiping Jesus when He was but a child. The worship event in heaven, highlights the glory of God and reveals the dilemma humankind was in regarding their relationship with God! The worship event in Matthew highlights the amazing trust the wise men had in Scripture and how God's Word led them in their worship.

Full Sermon Notes

"With every breath I long to follow Jesus For He has said that He will bring me home
And day by day I know He will renew me Until I stand with joy before the throne"
Folks we're going to talk about that amazing scene that will play out in heaven someday when we stand before the throne of God and worship Him face to face! It's going to be more awesome than you and I could ever imagine or fathom! But here's a wonderful truth...We don't have to wait until heaven to give God the gift of Worship He so deserves! Let's pray and invite The Lord to teach us and to transform us by His Spirit as we talk today about the perfect gift of worship!
Pray!

Introduction: Last week, we talked about the perfect Gift God gave us when He gave us His One and Only Son to save us from our sins and give us new life! We then talked about the gift we give God in return, which is living our lives for Him! Last week, in the first service I concluded the sermon with a verse that talks about the gift we give to God. I ran out of time and didn't get to share that verse in the second service, but here it is again, it is a good bridge from last week's message to this week's message:

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

The way we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, is to live our lives for His glory and honor! This is our true and proper worship, or as some translations say, "our reasonable act of worship!" But in addition to living our lives as a gift of worship, there are other forms of worship, in which we can show God our love for Him! And this would be through things like, praising God, singing to God, lifting our hands to God, giving offerings to God, using our talents for God, meditating on the goodness and greatness of God, lifting our prayers to God, and listening to God by studying His Word! All of these things are spiritual disciplines and we're going to have a whole series on this topic in our Relationships emphasis this coming year. And

this morning you can pick up the Bible reading plan for the first month of 2021 at the connect center, which has been prepared for you by your staff and church leaders.

So let's look at the definition of worship?

Worship: Worship is the means by which an individual both expresses love to God and experiences love from God! Worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God. to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote your will to the purpose of God.

To better understand the meaning of worship we are going to be reading primarily from two passages. The first passage starts in Revelation 4:9, which is in your readings for this final week of 260 Foundation readings, and Matthew 2, which is not in your readings, but plays a very important role in what we find in Revelation chapter 4&5. Before we jump into our text, I want to tell you a story that relates to what we're going to talk about today in our second part of "Finding the Perfect Gift!"

Years ago, my son, who wasn't able to come home from Japan for Christmas this year with his precious new bride, because of Covid, when he was a kid, he wanted a hockey game. In the weeks before Christmas he wanted to talk to me. He said, "Dad, I just can't stop thinking about it. Can't get it out of my mind. I think about it all night. I wake up thinking about it."

Children and adults are not so unlike in this. When we want something really bad, it consumes our thoughts and activities. We might get busy and forget for a time, but when we get a moment, our thoughts race back to what our hearts desire. Whatever it is you're seeking in your life, it consumes much of your time and energy. Have you been willing to ask the tough question? Is what I'm seeking really worth all the time, energy and resources I spend on it? Wise men and women eventually come to the realization that true fulfillment comes in finding and following the King of Hearts, the Prince of Peace, the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings!! Why is this so? Because our Creator God created us with the capacity to know Him. We are spiritual beings! You've heard me say this many times before: I call it the God-shaped hole in our hearts that only He can fill! Once we allow God to fill that void in our lives we will begin to experience a great desire to worship God! And because of the direction we have from Scripture to worship God, some people have accused God of having a big ego? But they have God all wrong! Worship is the way in which we express our love for God! Is it wired, wrong, or prideful for a parent to want their child to look up to them, to be proud of them, or to want their child to honor and respect them? Is it wrong if a child is grateful and wants to heap praise on their parents for the good things their parents have done for them? If a parent overhears their child saying something nice about them to one of their friends, would it be egotistical for the parent to be thankful and proud! No indeed! And that's with us being imperfect parents! But God is a perfect heavenly Father and loves us more than our earthly parents ever could, and He is so worthy of all the worship and praise we could ever give to Him! Worship is a perfect gift to give to God this Christmas and I want to explain to you why this morning!

We'll begin reading a portion of Revelation chapter 4 and 5, which is one of my favorite passages in all of the Bible, because it gives us such an awesome glimpse into heaven, and then we will end our message with the remainder of Revelation chapter 5. In between we will read our Matthew passage. We will be looking at two worship events in the Bible and how they are connected! One happened on earth, while the other happens in heaven! We'll begin with the worship event in heaven, which will highlight the glory of heaven and the dilemma humankind was in as far as a relationship with God was concerned!

Revelation 4:9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever,

Revelation 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Revelation 5:1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.

Revelation 5:2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"

Revelation 5:3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.

Revelation 5:4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.

The Dilemma

In John's amazing vision of heaven, He ends up weeping! Why? We are not told what the contents of the scroll or the book were, but many scholars believe the context of this passage suggest that the book contained the redemptive plan of God to save humankind! But there seems to be no hope for humanity, because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside at the plan! John is heart broken, and he weeps uncontrollably! He is emotionally devastated. This is not an unusual worship experience. Many times our first contact with the almighty shines the light on our hopelessness, our lostness, our sinfulness! But alas, something amazing happens.

Revelation 5:5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! 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."

Who is this Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David and why is He worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals? It is none other than Jesus Christ the Messiah! We've known Jesus as the Lamb of God and The Good Shepherd, and now He is being portrayed as the Lion! What does that mean? Is it possible for a lamb to be a Shepherd or a Shepherd to be a lamb, and could it ever be that a lamb could also be a lion? The answer is an amazing and resounding Yes!! You see, just because Jesus is a good Shepherd and the perfect and precious lamb of God, does not mean that you can dismiss Him as weak! He is meek, but He is not weak. He has the

strength of a Lion! He has the courage of a Lion! He has the stealth and wisdom of a lion! He laid down His life as the innocent and perfect Lamb of God, but in doing so, He rose up and soundly defeated Satan and all the forces of darkness in an epic spiritual battle on the Cross, and as such is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and is able to open the scroll! Jesus knew that by laying down His life He would secure for you and me a place in heaven, and He also knew that He would take up His life again at the resurrection! What made all of this possible? For this we must go back to Matthew 2, and let Matthew take us all the way back to Micah in the Old Testament. What we are about to unpack from Scripture, is to me, astounding! We are going to look at these two worship events in the Bible and see how and why they are connected! As we look at Matthew chapter 2 we discover a significant story that tells us...

1. Non-Jewish wise men worshiped Jesus as the Christ!

Mat 2:1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem

Mat 2:2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

The actions of the wise men in this story indicate that they were not just wise men in name. They were truly wise and we see this reflected in their worship of Jesus! Let's look at their actions.

The Wise men had obviously studied the Scripture!

The wise men were not Jewish. The magi may have been from Babylon, Persia, or the Arabian desert. Magi were variously considered priests of other religions, astrologers, sages, or magicians. They were teachers of religion and science and had particular interest in astrology and medicine. There is nothing to suggest that these magi were kings and Matthew doesn't give the number of wise men. It was because of their diverse knowledge, they were considered wise men. There is another reason, however, I would call them wise! These wise men weren't just trying to attain knowledge when they read, they were looking for truth. It was not unusual for a magi to be well versed in other religions. They were expected to know a lot about a lot of things. After all, they served as consultants for the kings. However, these guys didn't just read the Scripture, they studied it. They genuinely wanted to know the truth! How else would they find the one very obscure reference to a star found in the book of Numbers...

Num 24:15 Then he uttered his oracle: "The oracle of Balaam son of Beor, the oracle of one whose eye sees clearly,

Num 24:16 the oracle of one who hears the words of God, who has knowledge from the Most High, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened:

Num 24:17 "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.

Some have speculated that maybe the star was something like the great conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn the other night. I was able to capture a couple of pictures. This one is a long exposure zoomed out.



I was just on the other side of the twin spans looking southwest.

This next one is zoomed in and you can see Jupiter, three of its moons, and Saturn just to the right.



I'm not saying this was the star that led the wise men to Jesus, but I do think it's wonderful how God allows us to see amazing things in His creation! But back to the wise men! They not only knew about the star, they also knew about Bethlehem. Micah 5:2 says...

Micah 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

Last Sunday night Jeff read the Christmas story from Luke's Gospel. Isn't it ironic that the angels announced the birth of Christ to shepherds rather than the religious establishment. And now another irony: Non-Jewish magi read the Hebrew Scriptures and go looking for the Messiah! Wise men still search and study the Scripture. Just as the Scripture pointed the way for the wise men to find Jesus the King, those who read the Word of God today, will also be directed to Jesus. The wise men not only had read the Scriptures...

The Wise Men Believed Scripture!

The wise men journeyed from their homes far away to find the Messiah. The Jewish people knew about a promised Messiah but seemed uninterested. The religious establishment even knew the details, but either did not believe or didn't care. But look at the next verse of our text in Matthew...

Mat 2:3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

Mat 2:4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

Mat 2:5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

Mat 2:6 ""But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.""

Isn't this amazing. The Jewish religious leaders knew there was a prophesied Messiah to come, but they weren't preparing for their Messiah, their Savior, their King. They were so caught up in their legalism, tradition, social systems, power, etc. They had the knowledge but didn't act on it.

The wise men, on the other hand, asked, "Where is the One born king of the Jews, we have come to worship Him!" This has so many applications for us today. We say we believe, but our actions, or inaction, tell a different story. Americans have the freedom to worship and yet fewer and fewer do. We have access to Bibles galore, but spend scarce little time reading them. And yet, in the East, the church is growing even though under constant persecution. I have missionary friends in the far east who wrote to me and told me that 105 people placed their faith in Christ at a three day event! America has become much like Israel was when Jesus came to the earth. We're not looking for the messiah. There's a popular video game called Animal Crossing. It is played by people all over the world and it's story line coincides with real seasons and with holidays. My son was playing the game in Japan, a very secular nation, on Christmas and in the game it was called "Christmas day." Here in America, in the game, December 25th was called "Toy Day!" Very sad! We're so preoccupied with other things, or should I just say, things? There are countries in the world where people don't have much in the way of material things, but they are clamoring to hear the gospel, and we in America are hesitant to even acknowledge Christmas as Christmas. Why is God pouring out His Spirit in such amazing ways in some countries? Simple: They are still seeking to know the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, The King of Kings. The wise men studied Scripture and believed Scripture!! But that's not all...

The Wise Men Based Their Decisions on Their Belief in Scripture!

Mat 2:7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

Mat 2:8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

Mat 2:9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

Mat 2:10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

Mat 2:11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

Talking about faith!! They believed the Scripture so much that they followed the star, but something else you may never have thought of! They prepared to see the "One born King!" They brought gifts! Faith is taking God at His Word. When God says it, we need to base our decisions on His Word! Our plans, and our actions, should shout belief, confidence, and trust! The wise men's journey had probably not been an easy one, but they knew in their hearts they would find the promised Messiah, the King, so they prepared accordingly. They brought Gifts fit for a king!

Gold - A Gift of Value!

Precious metal. Valuable. Used to fashion crowns for Kings. This was a Prophetic gift!

Rev 14:14 I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

Incense - Frankincense/A Symbolic Gift.

An ingredient used in making the perfume for the most holy place in the tabernacle, and also prophetic...

2 Cor 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.

2 Cor 2:15 For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

Myrrh - A Useful gift!

An aromatic resin used as an ingredient in anointing oil, applied as perfume, placed in clothes to deodorize, and used in burial practices. This gift was also prophetic...

John 19:38 Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away.

John 19:39 He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.

John 19:40 Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.

Wow! God used these men from a far away place and their gifts to prophesy the truth about who this young child Jesus was and what He was to do with His life!! And have you ever thought about the fourth gift the wise men gave Jesus? It was the very first gift they gave Him...

Mat 2:11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.

Before they gave Jesus the physical gifts, they gave Him the gift He most desires, their loving worship! So the wise men studied Scripture, believed Scripture, based their decisions on their belief in Scripture and...

The Wise Men had Learned through Scripture to Trust God's Leadership!

Mat 2:12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

God uses a dream to tell the wise men not to return to Herod. Why? Herod was a horrible king. He was a liar and very deceptive. He did not want to worship the One born King. He wanted to destroy Him. Why? Herod had usurped the throne. He had no right to the throne. He had been appointed king of this region by the Roman Senate. They also gave him the title of Herod the Great. This went straight to his head. He was insanely jealous of anyone who might take his throne. He executed his favorite wife, his priestly brother-in-law and several of his sons. Listen...

Mat 2:16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

How sad. The difference between these two kings could not be more stark! Herod was a king who desired to rule for all the wrong reasons. He didn't care a moment for those he ruled! Jesus, on the other hand, was the King of Kings, and had a whole different attitude. In fact Jesus said this...

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

This statement from Jesus is one of the very reasons He deserves our worship! Jesus has your best interest at heart! Jesus is so giving and unselfish, and was so willing to serve others, and then He did the unthinkable by giving His life as a ransom for many, and that includes you and me! This is why we can trust His leadership in our lives, and when we realize we can trust Him and when we consider what He did for us, the desire to worship becomes strong within us! All of these things in Matthew's Gospel had to happen for the next worship experience to take place in heaven and as we return to Revelation 5 we discover...

2. All of Heaven Worships Jesus as the Christ!

Revelation 5:6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Revelation 5:7 He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

Now we can see the connection between these two worship experiences. In Matthew's Gospel the wise men came to worship the Lamb of God who would be, future tense, sacrificed for the sins of the world, and who would rise again to become the King of Kings. In John's Revelation, all of heaven worshipped the Lamb of God who was slain, past tense, and who rose again defeating death and the grave for all who would believe! When John says the Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, most scholars agree that John was using the word seven because it is the number of completion and perfection in Jewish theology. John was using this to show that Jesus was all powerful, all knowing, and that His Holy Spirit is complete and perfect in every way! In the first worship experience we looked at, the Wise Men brought three prophetic gifts signifying what Jesus would do for the world, and they worshipped Him! Now we see another spectacular worship experience, this one in heaven and it takes place because Jesus had fulfilled the prophecies of old, giving His life as the perfect sacrifice and was worthy to open the scroll! Watch what happens as we get this amazing glimpse of worship in heaven...

Revelation 5:8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people.

Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Revelation 5:10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Revelation 5:11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

Revelation 5:12 In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

Revelation 5:13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

Revelation 5:14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

I just don't know if there could be a more powerful picture of true worship or a better way to define worship!

They fell down before Him! True Worship begins with Humility!

The Hebrew word translated as humility is similar to another Hebrew word meaning "to be afflicted." In Old Testament thought, humility was closely associated with individuals who were poor and afflicted. Are we not all poor and afflicted? have we not all sinned and fallen short of

the glory of God? Are we not all spiritually impoverished? If we acknowledge this spiritual poverty, Jesus, the Lamb that was slain, has something to say...

Mat 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Those who are willing to humble themselves and admit their need for God will get to experience this amazing time of worship someday in person! But remember, we don't have to wait for heaven to worship and when you admit your need for God you will do what the elders in heaven did, but you will do this on earth...

They Laid down their crowns before Him! True Worship requires Submission!

Revelation 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne...

But I'm not a King. I have no kingdom and no crown. Yes you do have a kingdom. What do you mean? Your kingdom is your life, your possessions, your goals, your desires, your passion. God wants you to allow Him to become your king, your Lord!! The crown we lay at His feet is the surrender of our will to His and when we allow Him to become our Lord, we soon discover God is a much better king than you and I could ever be!!

Rom 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

Rom 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

And when you do this, you will also do what the elders in heaven did...

They Offered up their Praise to Him! True Worship includes Acknowledgement

They offered up their praise by acknowledging God as Sovereign Creator, and sustainer of all life! They acknowledged God's worth, God's Glory, God's Power and God's provision of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus the Lamb of God! They did this not only by bowing down, and laying down their crowns, but they acknowledged God's beauty and worth by offering up the prayers of God's people, and by singing songs! And the lyrics of their worship song are some of the most epic of all time!

Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Revelation 5:10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,

The greatest way to worship God is to leave the worship service and continue to worship by serving God with your life. You couldn't give God a more perfect gift!
Let's pray!