Let’s review before we look at chapter five.

On January 20, we found out that Revelation was written by the scribe, John the Apostle, who did his best to look, listen, and then write down the revelation. He did not create Revelation. We heard about Dr. Karl Barth’s approach to Revelation. He always had the phrase – “Oh, my” – close at hand, to say when he heard things he didn’t understand. I shared my way of interpreting Revelation. It’s lean and not extravagant like Dwight Moody, Cyrus Scofield, William Erdman, Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, and others. I also suggested that you consider the theology of the twenty songs in Revelation, and how they often carry the weight of the message rather than the narration. In a moment, we will be introduced to four more songs.

On January 27, I read all seven letters to the seven churches. Whew! The letters have similar patterns, but since the churches have different problems, each message is different. In the last letter to Laodicea, there is a helpful picture: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.”

On February 3, I introduced chapters four and five of Revelations with this comment: “If we understand chapters four and five, we can understand the rest of the Book of Revelation.” It was a bold statement, but I think it’s true.
I used a picture of Golden Gate Bridge to state my answer about the most important part of the bridge. Some say the paint, the cables, the road, or the rivets, but I proposed the two towers. Then I applied the idea of two towers to chapters four and five that I believe identify the two towers of theology: creation in chapter four and ______ in chapter five. I’m not ready to reveal the second tower yet.

Before I begin reading, I have five questions we need to answer.
   Who is worthy to open the scroll?
   Who is the Lamb?
   Why is the Lamb worthy?
   What is in the scroll?
   What does the content of the scroll mean for us?

As I read, please note I have underlined important words.

Revelation 5:1-14 NIV

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.

“The right hand of him” means the right hand of God who sat on the throne. God has the scroll and knows what is written in the scroll. Scroll has writing on both sides, sealed with seven seals. Lots of content in the scroll!

The seal was a commonly used stamp to protect the integrity of the content. Matthew tells us about the seal placed on the tomb of Jesus (Matthew 27:65-66).

2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?”

This angel isn’t just an angel, but a mighty angel, maybe Gabriel who was the messenger to Zechariah in the temple (Luke 1:19), and then Mary in Nazareth (Luke 1:26).

The mighty angel’s question is ours as well: Who is worthy to open the scroll? Who is worthy to know what’s inside the scroll?

3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.

The answer is this: No one is worthy. No one could do it. No one can open the scroll or even touch it. Those in heaven, those on earth, or even those in hell couldn’t’ do it.
John responded with tears. John wanted to know what was written in the scroll because, after all, Almighty God was holding the scroll!

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.”

One of the twenty-four elders spoke to John. It’s an odd moment in the entire book because usually John does not respond, nor does he receive sympathy or explanation. Nevertheless, an elder gives John comfort, and uses two Old Testament stories to explain.

The lion is the most named animal in the Bible. Only here is the lion described as the Messiah. Sixty-nine years ago, C.S. Lewis uses this same description when he names Aslan as the Messianic lion in his book, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. In Revelation, the elder connects the power of the lion with the family heritage of Judah, the fourth member of the family lineage from Abraham (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah) that concludes with the birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-17).

Then the elder calls upon the root of David (Isaiah 11:1, 10) as he tells John to look, really look, for who can open the scroll.

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.

The Lamb was in the center of the throne all along. “Oh, my” – it had seven horns and seven eyes.

There are two Greek words for lamb. One is the mighty lamb, actually a mature and strong sheep. The other word is for the little lamb, the innocent lamb.

What Greek word is used in verse six? Yes, it’s the word for the innocent lamb.

This lamb has the marks of death – looking as if it had been slain - but is now in the center of the throne along with Almighty God.

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

The lamb took the scroll from God. It’s a dramatic moment in the Book of Revelation. This lamb, of course, is the Risen Jesus, Christ our Lord, the Messiah, the One and Only Sacrifice for all time. Christ has the scroll.

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. 9 And they sang a new song, saying:
Lots of stuff happened when Christ takes the scroll. Everyone falls down before Christ. They worship Christ, and then sing a new song. A new song (see Psalm 33, 40, 96, 98, 144, 149).

Here comes the first song of this chapter.

“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.

Christ is worthy, they sing.

Why is Christ worthy? Because Christ died on the cross. He died for everyone – every tribe, every language, every people, and every nation! There is wideness in God’s mercy.

Did you notice the error on the front cover of the bulletin? It’s in fine print. So hard to read. Right below the hymn title – Worthy Is the Lamb – it quotes scripture. “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory…” Revelation 4:11. They should have quoted chapter five. Worthy is the Lamb is the subject of chapter five, not chapter four.

Here’s the rest of the first song.

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

Followers of Jesus Christ have responsibility.
   To build the church
   To further the kingdom
   To proclaim the reign of God
   To follow the lamb who was slain

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. 12 In a loud voice they were saying:

By the way, ten thousand times ten thousand equals 100 million angels. John hears testimony about the lamb, not just from the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, but from angels beyond counting.
Here comes the second song.

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
   to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
   and honor and glory and praise!”

This song repeats the first song and then adds the content from the song in chapter four that was sung to Almighty God. “To receive glory and honor and power!”

Christ receives the same praise as Almighty God, but even more is added: wealth, wisdom, strength, and praise. This song is sung to the Lamb because Christ died on the cross.

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:

Then everyone in all of creation joins the theme and praises Christ: those in heaven, those on earth, and those in hell.

Here comes the third song.

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
   be praise and honor and glory and power,
   for ever and ever!”

Admit it! There is no confusion in these songs. They are very clear. Maybe the pictures of the four living creatures, twenty-four elders, the harp, the seven eyes, and seven horns are confusing, but not these songs.

Here comes the fourth song of chapter five.

14 The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

The word “amen” is the fourth and final song of chapter five. Amen is sung by choirs and congregations. The Gloria we just sang has amen seven times. There many choral arrangements for the threefold amen, the fivefold amen, the sevenfold amen, and even the twelvefold amen.

The word “amen” is a transliteration of the Hebrew word “amen” which means “so let it be.” Others think it means: “I agree with that statement” or “Listen up.” It’s used frequently by Jesus when he says, “Amen, Amen” or “Truly, Truly” or “Verily, Verily.”.
My dad didn’t like to say “amen,” so he hummed instead. When something good was said at church, he would respond with: “Hmm, hmm.” In fact, my dad hummed a lot. He liked opera so much that he would memorize all of it. He could hum it to you. My older brother in Seattle has season tickets to the Opera, and when my dad attended with him, the brother would have to say, “Okay, dad. I know you have the opera entirely in your head, but you can’t hum along with the music. Others will hear you. And, dad, you can’t whistle either.” My dad could whistle all of Aida and Carmen, even Figaro’s Wedding.

When my dad died, he requested three pieces of music for his funeral: something from an opera, Amazing Grace (with all of the daughters and granddaughters singing like they did when my mom died), and Ragtime on the piano. When the family walked in the sanctuary with the casket, we had a great aria sung over the speaker system. About seven women and girls sang John Newton’s wonderful composition, and we found a guy off the street who played Ragtime. We got him a shower, bought him a suit, and gave him $100. He enjoyed the moment and we enjoyed him.

But when I started the funeral, I told everyone about my dad’s habit of humming. “If you knew my dad, I’m sure you heard him humming.” Everyone shook their heads in agreement. So I asked them to begin the funeral service by humming for a minute to honor the memory of my dad. It was great!

Have we answered all five questions? We need to add the question about the second tower of theology. Let’s ask again and answer each one.

Who is worthy to open the scroll? The Risen Jesus, Christ our Lord alone is worthy!

Who is the Lamb? The Risen Jesus, Christ our Lord!

Why is the Lamb worthy? Because Christ died on the cross!

What’s in the scroll? Let’s wait for a moment to answer.

What does the content of the scroll mean for us? Let’s wait.

What is the second tower? Creation is the first tower and the second tower is redemption.

Creation and redemption: the centers of Christian theology.

Of course, there is much more. Think about the Golden Gate Bridge again. The two major cables, almost 3 miles long, could be called love. Love is the greatest. Love holds everything together. The 500 wires connecting the main cables to the road could be called grace. Grace comes from God above to us below. Grace is unmerited and can’t be earned. Grace is a free gift from God. The massive road could be called the presence of God. God never leaves us and never forsakes us. God is always presence, always ready, always knocking on our door, and
through Christ, is our companion forever – even when our road sways back and forth. The 2.3 million rivets could be called the church. It’s everywhere – in all cultures, languages, and nations. The church needs renewal and reformation all of the time, just like the rivets that were replaced about the 1989 earthquake. And the paint could be called hope that keeps us alive and rust-free. That hope, that paint can be seen by others.

Creation and redemption! Chapters four and five of Revelation!

Now, what is in the scroll? All of the rest of Revelation is in the scroll. From Revelation six to the last chapter, the scroll is opened and the future is revealed.

What does that mean for us?

It means Christ our Lord knows all of the history. Christ knows our future. Christ knows when and what and how. And because Christ knows, we might as well just relax and trust Christ.