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SERMON TITLE: The Lion and the Lamb

SCRIPTURE: Revelation 5:5-10

DATE: April 10, 2022 Palm Sunday

Online service at www.fpcd.org/live-stream

Read also Isaiah 11:1-10.

In the Isaiah passage both lion and lamb are referenced as Isaiah prophecies “in that day the heir to David’s throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world.” We see images of power in the heir to David’s throne:

The earth will shake at the force of his word.

One breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked.

We also see images of respite and peace:

The wolf and the lamb will live together. A little child will lead them. Nothing will hurt or destroy . . . the earth will be filled with people who know the Lord.

We sing:

“Our God is the Lion, the Lion of Judah,
roaring with power and fighting our battles.”

“Our God is the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain,
for the sin of the world, his blood breaks the chains.”

Lion and Lamb. Two such opposite images. How are we to interpret who Jesus is?

Let’s turn to the Apostle John’s words in Revelation. Before we begin, it will help to understand that in the time it was written, the Scriptures were written on long scrolls which were rolled up. John describes seeing a scroll which had writing on the front and back. This is a book. It is in the hand of God, who sits on the throne, and it is sealed with seven seals (Rev. 5:1). No one was worthy to open it, and no one could read it while closed. This is God’s plan. It will be executed. Imagine knowing the mystery of God’s plans—or not knowing it! Because no one was worthy to open it, humans are not privy to it, thus John begins to weep over this vision. Let’s read it:

But one of the twenty-four elders said to me, “Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David’s throne, has won the victory. He is worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals.” Then I saw a Lamb that looked as if it had been slaughtered, but it was now standing between the throne and the four living beings and among the twenty-four elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which represent the sevenfold Spirit of God that is sent out into every part of the earth. He stepped forward and took the scroll from the right hand of the one sitting on the throne. And when he took the scroll, the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they held gold bowls filled with incense, which are the

prayers of God’s people. And they sang a new song with these words: “You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign on the earth.” Rev 5:5-10

John was told “Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David’s throne, has won the victory.”

Thousands of years before, Jacob—the father of the twelve sons; patriarch of Israel, Abraham’s grandson, Jacob—had blessed his twelve sons. Of Judah he said, “*You are like a lion’s whelp. He crouches down, he stretches out like a lion, who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah*” (Gen. 49:9-10a).

Jesus came from the line of Judah.

So, John looks for a lion. But instead he sees a Lamb! Not only that, it looks like it has been slaughtered but it is standing there beside the throne. And, He (the Lamb) is declared worthy!

*Our God is the Lion, the Lion of Judah,
roaring with power and fighting our battles.*

*Our God is the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain,
for the sin of the world, his blood breaks the chains.*

How can these two images mesh? How can a lion and a lamb live in the same person? How does it help us and why should we know this?

We have seen elements of meekness, tenderness, and humility in Jesus—he reaches out to all kinds of people to hear them out, like the young man who wonders what he has to do to gain eternal life. Jesus heals those who ask, and forgives their sin. He rides into Jerusalem on a humble donkey. **He’s a Lamb.**

Then there’s the other side—Jesus wields a whip against all the merchants in the temple, puts the religious leaders in their place with his wise and authoritative words, and destroys a fig tree with a curse. Who is this man? **He’s a Lion.**

Jesus is fully human and fully divine. This is an “unalterable fact.” It is a mystery that is perhaps defined in the scroll he takes from the Father’s hand! Jesus’ character is completely unique from any human being on the earth. Jesus was sent to us; he did not come out of us.

As to his Lion side—he was offended when he saw wrong! You know how it is when a friend turns against you, is disloyal,

betrays you, pretends to have your back but doesn't? Has anyone experienced that? How about someone who stole from you? Or misrepresented you to others? Or puts you down in front of others? Well, Jesus' Lion side is offended by how others do you wrong, as if they were doing the same to him! C. S. Lewis describes Jesus as "the party chiefly concerned, the person chiefly offended in all offenses." It is like when he sees you sinned against, he is the one being sinned against.

Jesus is righteous and stands to defend justice! This should give us great comfort. The Lion is strong and his commanding voice majestic. After all, his words "felled" both man and nature. No religious or political leader could outsmart him. His wisdom exceeded all others. A tree completely withered when he cursed it. We will recognize this fierce ability during his trial.

C. S. Lewis described his lion-like authority as "a claim to be God." He said this:

"There is one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic . . . or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse." . . . [He is not just a great moral teacher.] "He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

Here's the bright side of the Lion. He fights for you when you have been treated wrongly. He defends you when enemies come against you. He watches out for you without you even knowing it! He goes before you and opens the way and nothing will stop you from accomplishing what he has in mind for you. If you veer to the right or left, he steers you to the right path. He will tell you the truth when you need it, and shelters you in the storm. He is magnificently strong because **He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.**

Are you grateful for the strength and power and authority of the Lion who sits on the throne and reigns?

But there's more! We have discovered in our study that this is not the only side of Jesus.

For when John looked for the victorious Lion that day in his vision, he found a Lamb. The Lamb stepped up and took the scroll and when he did, all the elders and other living beings fell down before him and worshipped him. (Rev. 5:6-9)

Let's think about the Lamb. The Lamb has the characteristics of meekness, humility, gentleness, patience, grace—and he is a substitute. The lamb's blood covered the families of ancient Israel when they put it on their doorposts, exempting them from judgment and death. The lamb's body nourished them for the long journey to the Promised Land. The lamb died. The people lived. Your salvation is the same way. **Jesus, the Lamb of God, died for you. His blood covers you from judgment and death.**

Have you received him? By receiving him, you put yourself under his blood and are saved.

Jesus suffered. And yet he was completely innocent and undeserving of death. He was without sin. He meant everything to God. Everything he did pleased God and God loved him. His

suffering on the cross highly exalted him so that at his name, every knee shall bow on earth. John tells us some of the fruits of his sufferings:

People are saved from bondage to sin, guilt, and Satan;
People are redeemed to God;
People are liberated so we can enjoy God and serve him.

That is why all the elders and angels fell down before him and said, "**Worthy is the lamb that was slain!**" I will never forget standing in Carnegie Hall and listening to our Duncanville Community Choir, along with 300 other voices, singing *Messiah*:

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing and honour, glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.

This diversity of character, the Lion and Lamb, is extraordinarily wrapped up in Jesus. This never happens in a human being. This is God's doing. You have a defender and a Redeemer. His affliction, his willingness to bear all your and my sins leads to major gifts and liberties for us. **Shall we not live for him?** Shall we not enjoy every moment, despite the troubles that life brings, and sing his praises? Shall we not lay aside our differences with one another and invite others in?

Our God is a Lion, the Lion of Judah,
He's roaring with power and fighting our battles,
And every knee will bow before Him.

Our God is the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain
for the sin of the world, His blood breaks the chains.
And every knee will bow before the Lion and the Lamb,
Oh every knee will bow before the Lion and the lamb!

Who can stop Him? Who would want to stop Him?

AMEN