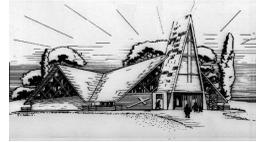




Free Evangelical Lutheran  
Synod in South Africa

## Sermon- Sunday Misericordias Domini

Who is worthy to open the scroll and  
break its seals?



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

### The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Rev 5, 1-14:

- 1 Then I saw in the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.
  - 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"
  - 3 And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,
  - 4 and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.
  - 5 And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."
  - 6 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.
  - 7 And He went and took the scroll from the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne.
  - 8 And when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.
  - 9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,
  - 10 and You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."
  - 11 Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,
  - 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!"
  - 13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!"
  - 14 And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshipped.
- Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, and our minds so that we will realise what Christ has done for us and be comforted so that we will give Him honour and praise! Amen.*

## Dear Flock of the Lamb of God!

John, the disciple is allowed to have a peek into heaven, whilst he was on the island Patmos. Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection from the viewpoint of heaven: The almighty Father of heaven and earth holds the book of His Will in His right hand! It is written! But, "*Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals*" – the voice of the strong angel thunders throughout heaven and earth and under the earth! A dramatic moment. No answer. No one was able to open the book or to see it! It was sealed with seven seals, it was the Father's Testament! Nobody was worthy to open the Testament of the One on the throne. It was completely sealed, seven seals. Seven is the number of fulfilment, of completeness. And this scroll was extraordinary in that it had writing on both sides. Normally you only wrote on one side of a scroll. But this scroll had writing all-over. No space for anything else. The complete Will or Testament of God the Father.

Yet, nobody was worthy to open it! What does a Testament help unless it is opened? Only when it is opened the Will of the One who wrote it is executed. So who is going to be the Executer of the Father's Will? In Heaven and on earth nobody answered. This was so sad, too much for John, who was allowed to look into heaven. He started weeping when he saw what was going on there. Who was going to bring history to its decreed end? Who was going to advance the story of the universe so that it would unfold according to the Will of God, according to His script?

Nobody was worthy, accept ... the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David who has conquered! Christ Jesus! He conquered to open the Book with the seven seals, God the Father's Testament! Looking on earth John saw Christ being crucified. In Heaven He conquered! He saw the Lamb standing, as though it had been slain- The marks of His suffering and death will always remain with Him. But the Lamb stands. He is the slaughtered Lamb, but at the same time the Lion, the Root of David, the king of Israel. He gave Himself as sacrifice and therefore He conquered!

He stands with seven horns, that is having all authority, and with seven eyes, that is, able to fully see the book! And this, having all authority and all insight in the Will of God are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. The Fullness of God's Spirit rests on the Lamb, namely the full authority to open the book and have full insight in it and to go out and proclaim it to all the earth!

Through the suffering and death of the Lamb history is advanced to its fulfilled end. This is what the battling church experiencing the cross in this world sees in faith: Suffering and death lead to victory! The suffering and death of our Lord

Jesus Christ has led to His Resurrection from the dead. Suffering and death is conquering the world! Please remember this! It is not as it seems or feels or looks! It is not failure. From God's perspective it is conquering the old Adam and satan who proclaim alongside our experience and feeling that we are losers, that we as Christ's disciples are losing out!

- As we hear the Word of Scripture we see what it shows us, namely the crucified Lamb now glorified having all authority in heaven and on earth and actively involved in sending out the Spirit of God into all the earth! The Lamb's insight, fulfilled, and the Father's Will executed, is going out into all the earth! The proclamation of the Gospel is the Spirit that is sent out. This Spirit is indeed a Life-giving Spirit! New Life is given to the Cosmos.

- The moment when Jesus took the scroll the heavenly congregation fell down before the Lamb in worship. They know what will happen. God's Mission is on track. The world underneath will still need a long time to learn this but in heaven the congregation sings a new hymn! Together with their own prayers the prayers from beneath are brought to the throne of the Father.

- In Heaven they sing of the mystery of Christ' death and resurrection. *"Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."*

- Note *"you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God"*! It is already done! Jesus has bought us free. Yes, we were enslaved! Whoever sins is enslaved to sin! But, He bought us free by the shedding of His blood. He gave up His Life so that we could live. He baptised us into His Body, God's Kingdom. We are His priests praying for others and sharing the mysteries of Christ with those outside the church.

- This new hymn is echoed throughout the Cosmos. The myriads and myriads of angels are falling in, the living creatures, the elders in heaven saying *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!"* The Lamb is worthy to receive what all leaders amongst human beings and fallen angels grabbed for themselves, chased after from generation to generation! The history of the world is one big fight, from beginning to end about who controls and rules over these major attributes. But we see: Who is worthy to receive power- only the Lamb who was slain. Who is worthy to receive wealth? Only the Lamb who was slain! Who is worthy to receive wisdom, and might and honour? Only the Lamb who was slain! Who is worthy to

receive glory and blessing? Only the Lamb who was slain!

• It is a completely fulfilled paradox, the weakest and humblest man ever to have walked on this earth, the Son of Man, is the only One who is worthy to receive all these mayor blessings from God!

• And the point is, when He took the scroll He did receive it: Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in creation sings, proclaims, confesses *"To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!"*

• Dear congregation, this is what a redeemed creation results in, that creation is freed to give all honour and glory to the Trinity. It is pure joy if every cell in your body and spirit honours and praises the Trinity. Being enslaved to sin is exactly the opposite, namely the desire to bless and give honour to someone or something that is not worthy of the ultimate honour and glory!

• Our language gives us away. We say, 'slavishly we follow this or that music icon or idol or sportsman or woman'. If someone would come up and rescue this country from falling into a junk status many would fall for that person, would give him all the honour and might and blessing! Yet, don't we have it before our eyes, don't we have it written in bold letters by history that these human saviours and idols or ideas are not worthy to receive our praise and worship! How quickly they can turn demonic! How quickly they start to misuse and become corrupt because they cannot handle all the power and might and honour. They are not worthy of it, and if we would start to worship them in any case, we would drive them to their certain destruction.

• Here is great wisdom, an amazing fact: Where Christ receives all honour and might and worship and strength and wealth the world is in order! That is where heaven is, because the intended difference between man and God is intact, is thriving, comes to its natural fulfilment! You know what? We need that! We need a God whom we can praise and give honour! Yet, not out of fear or sense of duty, but, because we are fully convinced and overflowing with thankfulness for Him having served us, still serving us and promised to always serve us!

• He washes you clean, He gives you a pure conscience. He makes you worthy to participate in the priesthood of all believers. You are serving with Him and reigning with the glorified Christ on earth! He is worthy and therefore He includes you! *"To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!" Amen.*

• *"The Grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all." Amen. [John 22,21]*