

To him Who Loves Us

Revelation

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Bible Verse: Revelation 1:5-6
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Please turn in your Bibles to the book of Revelation, chapter 1. We're going to be looking at verses 5 and 6 here this morning. I had planned for a longer section of text, but as often happens, it became obvious that we needed to slow down and to drink deeply from the well that's in front of us in these brief words. In Revelation chapter 1, verses 5 and 6, we'll start in the middle of the verse because that's where a new paragraph begins, having covered the first half of verse 5 last week. In the middle of verse 5, we read this,

5 ... To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6
and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and
dominion forever and ever. Amen.

We have said many times, and I expect to say many, many more times over the coming weeks and months, that perhaps the preeminent theme in the book of Revelation is the glory of Jesus Christ and the text that we have in front of us is really a doxology to Christ. A doxology, you break down the etymology of the word, it means a word of glory or a word of praise. This is a text that ascribes praise and glory to our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ and for a true believer, there is no sweeter theme to consider and to study than the glory of Christ in ascribing praise and honor to his glorious name. And one of the things that I think perhaps challenges us because we haven't thought through it enough, we will talk about the need and our responsibility and our privilege to glorify Christ, and you glorify Christ in your life and sometimes it can fall into a bit of a moralistic thing, and the focus is on how we live in order to glorify Christ and by what we do or what we say. Let me help you today and hopefully give you a seismic paradigm shift into what it means to actually glorify Christ, to understand on what basis we honor him, and by the time that we are done, if it has the same effect on you by the Holy Spirit that it has had on me, you almost want to just fall silent before Christ and in a sense say nothing because there is nothing sufficient to be said in response to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I was thinking this morning, there are two ways that you can kind of fall silent before God. One is through the fear of God. The end of Habakkuk chapter 2 says, "The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth fall silent before him," and the greatness of the glory and the majesty of God cause us to fall silent and to put our hands over our mouth, as it were, in response to his superior greatness and his power and his manifest glory and all of

that and you're just overwhelmed by the transcendent difference there is between him and us, the transcendent difference between the Creator and the Ruler of the universe and us as frail creatures of human flesh. You can fall silent before God on that grounds, and rightly so. You fall silent in the fear of God in total reverence, but there's another sense that we're going to see here today, that you fall silent when you start to grasp something of the immense love of Jesus Christ for sinners, the immense love that Christ has shown to our souls, and that's what's going to unfold here for us in this text, to just see how much the King of the universe, the eternal Son of God, has loved us and what he has done for us, and you start to realize the magnitude and the sheer generosity, the unprompted kindness and goodness that he has shown to us in our sins, in our misery, in our rebellion. He showed such great kindness to us and you start to work out the implications of that, and it's just laid out in such clear, simple language in our text here today, that you fall silent for an entirely different reason. You start to realize that there are no human words that are remotely adequate to give a proper response to that kind of love. There is no construction of human language that can begin to measure to the greatness that the love of Christ has shown. And while there is a sense in which our hearts burst forth in praise and they should, there's also a sense, beloved, and this is what I'd like to see the Spirit develop in your hearts here this morning as we go through this, there's also a sense in which you look at the magnitude of the love of Jesus Christ and you're just brought to silence because you say, "Where is there anywhere in the universe love like this? Where is there anything in my life remotely deserving a microscopic fraction of what he has done for me, that he has shown such kindness to me? Where in all of the universe will you find one who lays down his life for his enemies?" And that's what we want to see. And as we see these things, as we go through this text, oh so quickly and inadequately today, you'll see that that's why the people of God ascribe glory to his name. We bring a word of glory. We bring a word of praise to him. We see these things and all we can do is attribute the highest praise to him that he is so worthy of.

And what we see in this text, beloved, and to give you kind of just a simple phrase to organize all of your thoughts around, in this text, we see the great goodness of Jesus Christ to his people. We see the great goodness of Jesus Christ to his people and there's four points for today's message that we'll go through. And first of all, I want you to see, what is the first aspect of this great goodness of Jesus Christ to his people? Number one, it's how he loves us. It's how he loves us. Look there in verse 5, the middle of verse 5, with me, please, where it says, "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood."

Now let me just make a brief grammatical, couple of grammatical observations to help you see what's going on here; there are a couple of verbal adjectives that are used to describe Jesus Christ and to ascribe things about him and what he has done and who he is, and one of them is in a present tense form, the other expresses a past tense reality to it. So we see there in verse 5, "To him who loves us," present tense, in the original language, not so much an aspect of time, but a matter of an ongoing love that he has shown to us. And then in that second phrase, he "has freed us from our sins." In comparison to the present aspect, the ongoing aspect of his love, it looks back to something that happened in the past. And so there is a past aspect to the way that Christ

has loved us that we ascribe praise to him, there is this present ongoing aspect of his love for us that we ascribe praise to him and give him glory and that just kind of helps us get oriented to the text that is given to us.

Beloved, understand something, and part of the reason that I just make those brief observations is that God gives us understanding of his love through human language, not through mystical feelings in our heart. There is real actual truth communicated in human language, which the Holy Spirit helps us to understand, but it's communicated in logical expressions of human words that are addressed to the mind for you to understand, meditate upon, grasp and understand, and then your heart begins to be moved in response to the truth. The truth is addressed to your mind, that produces an emotional response of love which then warms you in a way that makes you more conditioned to obey. We're given over to a doctrine that is addressed to our minds, and we can never despise that. To diminish truth in human language, God has revealed himself in a written word, and God has given us minds and as part of the image of God in which he created us, we are intended to use our mental faculties to understand these things. And the idea, you know, in our postmodern culture that there is no such thing as absolute truth, the relentless appeals to emotion and everything from entertainment to politics to athletic events, it's all contrary to that which actually establishes us and roots us in the love of God. And so don't ever despise language, don't ever despise the time that we take to talk about points of grammar or things like that because it is in the structure that God has established in human language and the way that he revealed himself in human language that he makes himself known. And it takes time to teach such things, it takes effort to learn them, and so it's just very, very critical for us to understand that and to have the patience to go through it and to see where it all leads us. And so these verbal adjectives, Greek participles for those of you that know the language, "To him who loves us, to the one who loves us, and to the one who has freed us from our sins by his blood," that's the combination that is important for us to grasp. We're going to take them separately, how he loves us and how he freed us will be the second point.

So why do we give glory to Christ? Why do we honor his name above all names? Why do true Christians give their unswerving, undying, unconditional allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ as the principle that animates and governs their hearts, however short they may fall in day-to-day practice? Every true Christian has a sense of unconditional devotion and allegiance and love for Christ, why is that? Well, Christ is the one who loves us, present tense. Look at it again there in verse 5 with me, "To him who loves us," present tense. To him who loves us now, who loves us always. And what is this word love of which we speak, so corrupted by the erotic and sensual and perverse ways that that word has been used in our lifetime? Well, one dictionary, one lexical source, gives this definition for the Greek word *agapaō*, it says, to have such an interest in another that you wish to contribute to their well-being. Let that sink in. Love is to have such an interest in someone else that you wish to contribute to their well-being. That is what our Christ has done. He's taken interest in us. He has set his affection upon us in a way that seeks our well-being both now and for all of eternity. And I want you to reflect on that. It is just so important for us and I believe that the vast majority, the bulk of you that are gathered together in the room, you want to approach Christ without a sense of self-

interest. You're not seeking after Christ just for what he can do for you, but for his own intrinsic excellence and greatness, and you seek him for that reason. But all the more reason for us to reinforce that and to dwell upon it, on who it is that we're talking about. Scripture had just said earlier in verse 5, look at it with me, who is this that has taken an interest in our well-being? Verse 5, it's "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, the ruler of kings on earth." This is the Christ who is exalted above all. This is the Christ by whose mouth, by whose word, creation came into existence. This is the one who sovereignly reigns over nations, who reigns over the rise and fall of nations, the rise and fall of leaders, the one who has his eye on the sparrow, who knows the numbers of our head. This great, great Christ, from the position of preeminence in the universe, preeminence over the realm of death, preeminence over the realm of the resurrection, the eternal Son of God, co-equal with the Father, who has no beginning, will have no end, that one is the one who's taken an interest in your soul, who's taken an interest in you and wants to contribute to your well-being. My Christian brother, my Christian sister, the one who had the power to stop a hurricane, as it were, and turn it into glass instantly by the mere speaking of his word, that's the one who has taken an interest in you. The one who could call Lazarus from the dead. The one who could shrivel up a fig tree by the mere speaking of his word. The one who spoke and everyone recognized that they were hearing words of unparalleled greatness, never as a man spoken in this way. As you just go through the most basic teachings about Christ and what Scripture relates about his nature, his person, and his work, that he is God in human flesh and he manifested himself in such manifold miracles. At the end of the gospel of John, John said, "You know, I couldn't even begin to tell you everything. If I wrote everything that Christ did, if I tried to write all of it down, the world couldn't contain all of the books." That Christ is the one who loves us. That is the one, he is the one who takes an interest in our well-being.

Already, beloved, any right-thinking person, anyone with a modicum of ability to set aside selfish preoccupation about their own circumstances in life, anyone who can set that aside and see the greatness of Christ realizes that for him to love us is something that's really hard to contemplate and to put into words. Why? Why would he do that? Why would the one who dwelled as the center of worship and affection of angels in heaven, why would he take interest in us, mere passing creatures of human flesh, mere rebels to his will? Why would he take interest in us? Not only just take interest in us, why would he be concerned for our well-being? Why would he want good for us when in our sin we merely wanted to silence him to pursue our sinful desires? Why? Because he's good. Because he's kind. Because he's not like us. He used his position of unparalleled greatness in order to be a blessing to his people and, beloved, the proof of his love, as you contemplate Scripture, the proof of his love, it's multifaceted, it's continuous, it's unbroken. It goes from a microscopic view of life to the heavenly cosmos. It goes from the present day-to-day nature of our existence back into eternity past when in love he chose us before the foundation of the world. And it goes forward into eternity where he will bless us and keep us and sanctify us, finally glorify us is what I meant to say, so that we're with him throughout all of eternity, looking on him, looking at his face, belonging there, belonging to Christ, enjoying his glory, and sharing in his reign, and sharing in the blessing with the saints throughout all of the ages to be a part of the eternal family of

God. Of course he loves us. Out on any thought that describes any kind of ill motive or lack of generosity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think about it from this perspective. Think about it from this perspective. This Lord Jesus of whom we speak, perfect God in perfect humanity, he sends his sun and rain on the righteous and the unrighteous alike. Such generosity. Men who will never praise him are on the receiving end of his common grace. How does he love us? Scripture says he numbers the hairs on our head. So intimately aware of every detail that affects us, the things that none of us care about, who cares whether it's six thousand or six hairs on your head? He does. So comprehensive and pervasive is his care for us. You go to Matthew 6 and you see that you see that he feeds the birds of the air. He knows when a sparrow falls to the earth, in Matthew 10. He colors the lilies of the field. And I love this time of year. I love spring. It's by far my most favorite time of year. You start to see the colors splash out on the trees. You start to see flowers springing up from the soil and the richness and the vibrancy of those colors and the warmth of the change of season, the majesty of thunderstorms, and all of these things that are just slight human expressions of it, and what Scripture tells us in Matthew chapter 6 is to look at all of the way that he cares for the lesser elements of creation. Look on how he cares for the birds of the air. Look on how he cares and clothes the flowers of the field. And then the argument of Scripture, the presentation that Christ himself makes about all of this, is to understand that you are of much greater value to him than sparrows, that you are of much greater value to him than the flowers of the field. He values his people infinitely more than those elements of creation that he gives comprehensive, minute, detailed attention to.

And you go on. That's just in the physical realm. You go on. In love, he keeps us. He keeps us spiritually. He preserves us so that in John chapter 10 verse 28 he said, "I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand." Are you a Christian here this morning? The Lord Jesus Christ is showing his ongoing love to you because he is keeping you. He has you, as it were, in the palm of his hand. He says, "I am the one who gave eternal life to you. I am keeping you. And in my sovereign power, in my sovereign will, it is my determination to protect you and to keep you from every foe, from every lie, from every effort of Satan and the demons and hell itself to hinder your salvation, to take you away." Christ personally takes responsibility. Christ personally exercises his power to keep you so that you would never be lost and there would never be any possibility that you would be lost and he is doing that on an ongoing basis. He never once takes his eye off of you. Scripture says in Philippians 1:6, "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus." And in chapter 1 of 1 John, we read that if we "walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin." The idea is a continual, ongoing cleansing from sin. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If anyone sins," chapter 2 verse 1, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." I mean, honestly, you take something of that in, in the fullness of the scope of it, where do you even begin to speak? Where do you even begin to respond to that? Eternal love choosing us before the foundation of the world. Redeeming love, as we'll see in point number two

in a moment, at the cross. Regenerating, drawing, calling love at the time of our conversion, sanctifying love, cleansing love as we confess our sins, he continually forgives us, continually cleanses us, never with any sense of reluctance or impatience, in perfect patience, in perfect love, in perfect grace, he cleanses and keeps us.

Beloved, don't you see? Don't you see that the Lord Jesus Christ has an interest in your well-being? Don't you see it? Do you see that he has not only had an impulse of affection toward you, he has taken the full counsel of God, he has taken the full measure of divine omnipotence and grace combined, and he has exercised all of that to contribute unfailingly, inerrantly, eternally to your well-being. He loves us as measured by how much he guarantees the well-being of us. What kind of unprompted love is that? Well, beloved, go back to verse 5 with me and understand that as we speak about this love and concern for our well-being, Revelation 1 verse 5, "To him who loves us," go to the end of verse 6, "be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." To this Christ, we ascribe the highest praise, the highest glory, the greatest might. We ascribe glory to him. You glorify Christ when you ascribe praise to his name in response to an understanding of his love for you. That's how you glorify Christ. It starts with him. It starts with what he has done. It starts with his great character and we use biblical words to ascribe our thanks and gratitude toward him.

Beloved, in Romans chapter 5, verse 5, actually, turn to Romans 5. I hadn't planned to go there, but here we are, we're going there. Romans chapter 5. The love and the glory of which we speak is a glad-hearted, joyful response. We could only hear these things rightly and understand them and joyfully, willingly, praisingly ascribe glory to his name. So in Romans chapter 5, verse 1, it reads, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Never think about your relationship with God apart from Christ. He is central to it all. Verse 2, "Through him," that is, through Christ, "we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame," here it is, "because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Love poured out on us in Christ. Love poured out on us in the person of the indwelling Spirit. Love poured out on us as shown by our justification before God. All of our sins forgiven, accepted as righteous in the presence of God, declared righteous in a way that can never be reversed. All in the Lord Jesus Christ. "To him who loves us, be glory and dominion forever and ever." Yes, we look at how he loved, how he loves us, realize that this is an ongoing reality. It's not simply and only that we look back to the cross and recognize his love. We realize that there is an ongoing dimension to this that is higher than the skies, that is deeper than the seas, that is broader than West is from East, and we are, as it were, safe in an incredible ocean of love that can never be exhausted. Yes, I say. Yes, I say to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Now secondly, let's look at how he freed us. How he freed us, and there will be some overlap here, because he freed us because of his love for us, his desire for our well-being to contribute, to secure our well-being, of course, there's going to be overlap here, but

look there in the middle of verse 5 with me. "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood." He has freed us from our sins by his blood. Beloved, the love of Christ, and by the way, for those of you that like titles for your notes, the simple title of today's message is, "To Him Who Loves Us." To Him Who Loves Us. We've seen how he loves us, point number one. Secondly, we consider how he freed us. And in, oh my goodness, especially, beloved, when you contrast this eternal love of Christ with the tawdry, corrupt notions of love that are passed off to us today, love that someone will love you today, but they'll turn on you tomorrow. It's not love, love that is corrupted in sin. Our whole concept of love is so distorted by what we're fed and the sewage that is poured into us in the world all around us. Understand this, beloved, understand this, that the love of Christ was no sentimental feeling here today and gone tomorrow. In love, he did something of permanent, eternal, lasting consequence on our behalf. It says there, look at it again with me in verse 5, he has freed us from our sins by his blood. Now let's just contemplate this for just a moment. It's looking back to something that he did, he has freed us, he has freed us from a realm of our sins, and the means by which he did that was the pouring out of his own lifeblood on the cross. He laid down his life for his friends. He freed us from our sins. Beloved, that's a six-month series in its own. This alone would be adequate grounds for us to praise and thank him throughout all of eternity if there was nothing else to talk about. This one book out of the library would consume every aspect of our attention for all of eternity considering this.

Let's look at it in a little bit more detail. He has freed us. He has freed us. The verbal form there comes from the Greek verb *luo*, L-U-O, for an English transliteration. It's a verb that is most familiar to Greek students. This is the verb by which you learn every aspect of the verbal system in the Greek language. If you take a couple of semesters of Greek, you've gone through the word *luo* literally thousands of times in order to master it, and so it's just in terms of learning and acquiring the Greek language, *luo* is kind of like a formative foundational block to it all. What does *luo* mean? As it's translated here, it means to free, is a fine translation. You learn it in Greek as it means to loose, or you could say to set loose, to release or to remove a hindrance. And so what Christ has done, he has freed us from our sins. He has set us loose from them. The sins that previously dominated us, and I need to go into some detail about this, the whole realm of sin in which we lived as children of Adam, that realm of condemnation, of bondage, of lies, of death and destruction and damnation, of hell and demons and Satan, that whole realm of sin, that whole realm of all of our individual sins, the lies, the lusts, the lack of true divine worship, the lack of love for God, the lack of love for men, the failure to honor parents, the commission of adultery, lies, thieving, coveting, go through the Ten Commandments, all of that oppressive weight of guilt and sin upon us and our bondage to it and our love for it, all of that, beloved, Christ has taken those massive chains and snapped them and removed them from us so that we have been set free from them. So that, think about it this way, so that the penalty for our sins, the judgment of God, the condemnation of God upon us, the righteous judgment of God unleashed on sinners in hell throughout all of eternity, a hell that is real, a hell that is painful, a hell that is eternal, a hell to which you were bound and you were headed, with no possibility of deliverance from that, Christ intervened. Christ set you free from that. Christ released us from that. That penalty has been taken away. When he suffered on the cross, the penalty that justice required at your

hands, Christ, as it were, said, "Lay it on me, Father. I'll take that penalty. Speaking metaphorically here, and I try not to speak in the first person this way very much, Christ, as it were, says, "I love these people. I want to secure their well-being. I want to contribute to their well-being. And their well-being, the beginning point of their well-being is they are in danger of eternal judgment. They are guilty before a holy God. Something must be done to release them from that. Something must be done to set them free." In the eternal councils in the covenant of redemption, Christ said, "I'll do that. I'll go to earth. I'll live there rejected and despised for 30 some years. I'll go to the cross and everything that justice demands be poured out on them, I'll take it. I'll suffer it." Because of his love for us, because he wants our well-being and so he freed us from the penalty of sin by paying for them with his own blood, as it says there in verse 5, by his blood, by the instrument of his blood. He set us free. Romans chapter 8 verse 1, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Why? Because he loved us and because he set us free from that condemnation.

Think about it this way, in Christ, the power of sin is broken. That dominating power of sin, that relentless inability to overcome sin in your life, that power in Christ is broken. And in securing our well-being and contributing to our well-being, Christ places his Holy Spirit within us and in resurrection power, the power that raised Christ from the dead is the power that he has graciously given to us. You can read about this in Ephesians 1 verses 15 to 23. The power that raised Christ from the dead is the power imparted to our life in order that we might overcome the power of sin and increasingly grow in holiness while we walk on this earth. That power broken. Some of you perhaps in your testimony can point to aspects of your testimony that I can in different ways, different areas of life. I remember, wasn't planning to say this, but it just illustrates what I'm saying, so that's why we're doing it. Before I was a Christian, back in my late teens, early twenties, I shudder to remember it. Among many other sins, I was a man of just such a foul, profane mouth. The things that would come out of my mouth in filthy talk, in blasphemies against God, in using the name of Christ in vain in just horrific ways, and this was an established pattern of my speech and conduct. I'm not so far removed from it that the awful stench of the memory of it doesn't still rise up in my nostrils when it comes to mind. Hate it. Hate to even remember it. And that's the way I was. That was my mouth, an open sewer of ungodliness. and just the cursings that just rolled off my tongue as they were folded into my tongue in a way that no mouthwash could ever have cleansed them. No way. But the Lord saved me. And you know what? One of the things that he did, and he's got a lot of other sins still to this day that he's sanctifying me from, but that power of an ungodly tongue, he broke it. And without my even trying, without my consciously saying, "Oh, I need to stop cussing now," I've stopped cursing. The words of peace and love and joy and hope started coming out of my heart naturally. Why? Not because of anything good in me, but because Christ had loosed me from my sins. He had freed me from that particular aspect of sin by his blood, by his saving redemption of my soul, and one of the ways that it was manifested was the fact that my mouth was suddenly clean in comparison to what it had been. You see, he frees us from our sins. Those of you that are saved, what can you look at and point to? Some of you, I know, can look at the way the Lord delivered you from drunkenness, delivered you from sexual sin perhaps, restored you to love where hatred had manifested your heart, perhaps more subtly, having changed you from a

sarcastic person of biting wit to now seeking to just speak truth and be an encouragement to someone. This is Christ breaking the power of sin in your life. It is Christ loosing you, setting you loose from that which is ugly and defiling and setting you on a path of godliness and redemption from all of those things.

And then, so he set us free from the penalty of sin, we fear no condemnation, we boldly approach the throne of God now in him. The power of sin is broken and even in those sins that still sometimes crop up, we have power over them; we don't have to sin anymore. And one day, when we are in heaven with glorified bodies, we will be delivered from the very presence of sin itself and we will be there without any internal corruption, without any lingering stench of sin, with all of the lies and the lusts and everything else permanently removed and banished, perfected in holiness, what Scripture calls the state of glorification. In that moment, we will most fully, that eternal moment, that eternal state, we will most fully realize how much Christ has freed us from our sins by his blood. Yeah, you know what, I don't mind telling you, I don't have the vocabulary or the intelligence or the spiritual depth to begin to ascribe adequate praise to Christ for that. And so, beloved, stepping back from all of it, you know, the penalty of sin, the presence of sin, ultimately, and the power of sin in our lives, beloved, here's the point for today's text, is that your sin and your guilt was a great, great hindrance to your well-being. It was an eternal threat to your soul. You stood before God, guilty and condemned, unable and unwilling to do anything to change your condition, dead in trespasses and sins, dominated, blinded by Satan himself. A child of Satan, you lied because you were a son of the father of lies, Scripture says. And oh, the horror of the bottomless abyss into which you were plunging. The horror of the darkness, the horror of the gnashing of teeth, and you, even blind to your own danger, blissfully unaware of, as Jonathan Edwards put it, the fact that you're hanging by a spider's thread over the gaping throat of hell just waiting for one little breeze, one little snap to plunge you down into eternal destruction. There you were so vulnerable, so guilty, so clueless and what did Christ do? With that eternal love, he took an interest in you if you're in Christ, and he did something to help you. He was the Lamb of God sacrificed for you.

And Scripture looks back to the cross as something of the supreme emblem of his love for us. Listen to these verses. We're not going to turn to them for the sake of time but to see how his love and his deliverance of us from sin are so intimately joined together. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Your well-being, that you would not perish but have eternal life, Christ took an interest in that because he loved you. John 15, Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you." Romans 5 verse 8, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." Galatians 2:20, "The Son of God loved me and gave himself for me." Ephesians 2:4, and 5, "God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together in Christ, by grace you have been saved." 1 John 4:10, "In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." On and on it goes and, beloved, what did I read there, a half

dozen verses? I left many more on the cutting floor of the editing, just because there's just no end to what you could say about it you just give a sampling,

And so he freed us from our sins, freed us at the cross, freed us by his blood, blood being a recognition of the blood sacrifice that he paid, innocent blood shed on behalf of guilty sinners so that the debt could be paid, so that the penalty would be fulfilled, just as fulfilled, and now grace free to operate. He paid the penalty on our behalf. He freed us. By resurrection power, he delivered us and has delivered us from the dominion of sin. He freed us. He set us loose. Now united in Christ with him, we are seated in the heavenly places. That is our position in the universe, we are seated with Christ right now in the heavenly places, set free, brought securely into the family of God one day to enter in fully to the ultimate blessing of that and seeing him face -o-face. Yeah, beloved. Yes, yes, indeed, "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

But this doxology in Revelation 1, it goes on. Look at verse 6. We've seen how he loves us, how he freed us, now thirdly, we see what he made us. What he made us. Verse 6, he "made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father." Now notice that you kind of get a three-fold ascription of praise, a three-fold description of how Christ loves us and what he's done for us. Notice the word "and" here. "To him who loves us," number one, "and," number two, "has freed us from our sins, and," number three, "made us a kingdom." You see, Christ didn't just take an eraser to the blackboard and just kind of rub off your sins and leave things as a blank slate. No, he completely transformed us and brought us into a condition and a position that is utterly different, completely permanent, a great lasting outcome from his love and sacrifice on our behalf. He's taken such an interest in us, he's taken such an interest in us to love us, he took such an interest in us to sacrifice himself on our behalf and then to establish us in a position we never could have earned by his grace doing this, verse 6, he "made us a kingdom, priest to his God and Father."

I won't spend a whole lot of time here. Here in the idea of kingdom, what Christ has done, a kingdom is a realm where someone rules as king, okay? Pretty simple. There's kind of a dual aspect when we think about the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ. We should think about the kingdom as a spiritual realm where Christ rules over us as king, his threefold office, prophet, priest, and king. We've talked about that. Christ is a king, and now we are in the spiritual realm over which he exercises his kingly sovereignty. Whereas before we were in the realm of Adam, Romans 5:12 to 21, we were in the realm of death, the realm of sin, the realm of judgment, the realm of Satan, where Satan ruled, leading us to hell. Oh, oh, beloved, Christ loved us, he loosed us, and he made us a kingdom. Colossians 1 says he "has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Whereas before that cruel taskmaster, the devil, that liar, that murderer from the beginning was your king, was your master, was your lord, in reality, whether you recognize that or not, Christ, the stronger man, so to speak, enters into Satan's realm, conquers, delivers, takes his people up and transfers them into his kingdom. No longer in the jurisdiction of Satan, now under his kingly rule over which he exercises his love, his sovereignty, his providential care.

We're in his kingdom. He did that for us. No one else could have done it. Mary couldn't have done that. Joseph Smith couldn't have done that. Mary Baker Eddy couldn't have done that. Catholic Church can't do that. Nobody has power over the spiritual realm. You have to be stronger than Satan in order to do a deliverance like that. Well, you know what? Christ is stronger than Satan, and Christ acted out of love. He acted on our behalf for our well-being. When we get to Revelation 20 in about 15 years, it won't be that long, but in Revelation 20 we'll read about the coming earthly kingdom of Christ and it says that we'll be priests of God and of Christ and they will reign with him for a thousand years. We're under his reign now in the spiritual realm, one day we'll be somehow sharing in the reign of Christ when he reigns from Jerusalem for a thousand years. And in this kingdom, we function as priests. It's not that we become mediators between God and man. There's only one mediator, 1 Timothy 2 verse 5 says, there's only one mediator between God and man, that's the man, Jesus Christ. But he's made us a kingdom. There's a realm over which he exercises his rule, and that's the spiritual aspect of the kingdom. And in that kingdom, we function like priests in this way, believers have access to the immediate presence of God. We perform priestly functions. We offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, worship, and praise to God.

Turn back to Hebrews 13 for just a moment. Skip back past the letters of John and the letters of Peter and the letter of James and you'll come to Hebrews. Hebrews 13 verse 15, "Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name." This theme of us being a kingdom and priest, it's repeated in heaven as part of the praise that is given to God in heaven itself. In Revelation chapter 5 verses 9 and 10 it says this, "they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain,' obviously speaking to Christ, "and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation," here it is, verse 10, "and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." That's what he's made us, a functioning kingdom, a functioning priesthood under his realm, offering praise to him, doing what real priests do, giving him the sacrifice of our love and our praise and our honor to him.

That's what he's made us. What a privilege! What a privilege! From the sinful people that we used to be, the rebels, how grotesque and ugly our lives and our hearts were, and he made us into something completely different, something holy, something remarkable, something in his purpose. He made us a kingdom and priests, a privilege bestowed on you with responsibilities, but a privilege bestowed on you that it operates to your well-being that you didn't deserve. I mean honestly, beloved, how does our heart not melt before this? How does the deepest praise not well up in our hearts in response to this? He loves us. He set us free from our sins. He's made us a kingdom and priests.

Well, it leads us to our fourth and final point, which is how we worship. How we worship. In light of how he loves us, in light of how he has freed us, in light of what he has made us, here's the response, verse 6, Revelation chapter 1, "to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Having contemplated the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Apostle John praises him, ascribes glory to him. Notice this, beloved, here's

another little grammatical point for you to notice. There's one of those inclusions that we talk about so often, the bookends of a passage. Here in verse 5, it opens up "to him who loves us," and on it goes, 1, 2, 3. Then he picks up the "to him" again in verse 6. Having said that he loves us, he freed us, the one who made us a kingdom and priests, "to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." It is emphatic. He says "to him" who did this, and he describes it, then he says "to him", lest we forget, there is an emphasis in the repetition of "to him" that sets Christ apart from everything in the visible and invisible realms altogether so that you are left with this remarkable exclusivity of Christ that sets him apart so that Christ and Christ alone receives glory, Christ alone has the dominion. No one else shares in it. Out on any ideas that we somehow contributed to our salvation. Out on that. It's a despicable thought in light of the glory of Christ.

The word glory indicates that the highest esteem goes to him. The deepest, most sacred aspects of your heart belong to Christ and to Christ alone. Not to your mate, not to your children, not to your wealth, not to your job, not to the Bengals, nothing. Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing in light of the fact that he loves us and he set us free and he's made us a kingdom and priests. Nothing else could possibly have any competing role of affection for the Lord Jesus Christ and if that doesn't make sense to you, beloved, you're not a Christian. A true Christian understands that he owes his life and salvation to Christ alone and therefore he could be the only one who would have the ultimate throne in our hearts. Do you understand that? Is that the condition of your heart today? That he gets the highest esteem from you and nothing else is in second, third, fourth, down to tenth place? Nothing else competes with your allegiance, your loyalty, and your love for Christ. That's what it means to be a Christian in response to the fact that he freed us with his blood.

And so, when John says "to him be glory," he says, to this Christ who has done all of these things, be the highest esteem. Dominion, communicates strength and might. In the book of Revelation, we see Christ manifesting omnipotence over the nations. He will show and display his strength, and all of the armies of the world won't stand a chance of resistance against him. Oh, the intrinsic excellence of Christ endures for all of eternity, forever and ever, unchallenged with no decline, with no diminishment. He is alone on the throne, the throne of our hearts, one day the throne of the earth, the throne of heaven, And so I repeat that the best construction, the highest abilities of human language are completely inadequate and insufficient to give proper, fitting, full praise and honor to Christ. Nothing could exhaust it, is what I mean by that. Sometimes you just, maybe we just should stay silent in light of this and rather than being so quick to speak as so many of us are, so quick to speak and to rattle our tongues off, to forcibly grab our tongue, I'm being metaphorical here, but to grab our tongue and hold it, to stop it from speaking so that our minds would operate unhindered by our voices and to just take in the significance of how he loves us, how he freed us, how and what he made us.

It's his dominion forever and ever, for all of eternity. Look at the end of verse 6 there. John says, "Amen." Amen, meaning let it be so. That's the way it is. It is a strong affirmation in worship. And so the "amen" unqualifiedly affirms this ascription of exclusive esteem and power to Christ. It excludes, it forcibly removes all items of doubt, all matters of competition in the heart. It clears the field, you might say, so that Christ

stands alone on the field of glory, and we stand, as it were, as spectators and look and ascribe glory to him, and with whatever we can do, we applaud him as the ultimate victor, the one alone worthy of glory.

And so, beloved, let me just remind you that I said at the beginning of this exposition of Revelation, one of the first things I said was the theme you see, the first theme we mentioned in the book of Revelation is you see the glory of Christ. There it is. And so I ask you as a pastor, are you assured of his love for your soul? Has the blood of Jesus, his Son, washed you from all of your sins? Are you in the kingdom of God enjoying access to him? Beloved, whatever else is happening in life, if those things are true of you, you are of all men most greatly blessed. Give Christ the honor and esteem that he deserves and repent of every sin that would diminish that glory in your life. To those of you that are not in Christ, he offers himself, in completed victorious love he offers himself and says, "You may take part also. Come to me and be saved." But beloved, the only right response is for us to anchor our affections in Christ and to anchor them in a way that it is clear in our thinking, clear in our affections, clear in our living that Christ is and forever will be preeminent. Amen, amen and amen. Now, forever and ever. Amen.

Bow with me in prayer.

Gracious Lord Jesus, O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise. To you and you alone who love us, you have freed us from our sins by your blood, you've made us a kingdom, priests to your God and Father, O Christ, to you alone be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

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