

# Admire Christ's Perfect Sacrifice

## LHC: Message Twenty-Five (980628PM)

### Week 25: Admire Christ's Perfect Sacrifice

(Revelation 5)

As the end of days approaches, you can find hope as you admire the perfect sacrifice of Christ!

#### SUNDAY: Admiring Christ at the Throne of Judgment

***"Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!"***

—Revelation 5:13, emphasis added

As we look into the final book of the Bible again, remember that it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. The entire Bible is now combined into one majestic picture of Jesus as the Lamb of God. He whom the prophets foretold, the priest portrayed, and to whom John the Baptist pointed, the One who stood unknown in the midst of men, is now shown to be the center of God's plan for the last segment of time prior to when time shall be no more. And at the very center of the universe is His throne—a place of eternal calm, unceasing tranquility, perfect peace, and endless day—like the calm in the eye of a storm.

I had never experienced the calm in the eye of a storm until a hurricane swept through New England in 1989. Hour after hour, the winds increased until mature trees were snapping like little twigs. Then it happened: there was a perfect pool of quiet calm in between the storm's two-pronged devastation. And that is where we are in Revelation 4 and 5—a place of tranquility in between the stormy church age and the tempestuous end of the earth as we know it.

- **Revelation 1–3 reveals His struggling churches.** As Jesus looks at these saints with His laser-like eyes, He takes their pulse, and then warns: "I am only finding some of your lives pleasing in My sight. Repent and come back. Do what I commanded you to do at first."
- **Revelation 4 reveals the calm between the two storms.** People who perpetually experience the presence of God can live in the eye of the storm continually, having calmness in the midst of the struggle all around them. Perfect peace always exists in God's presence.
- **Revelation 5–20 reveals the end of the earth.** To fully understand what is going on in these chapters, this week we will admire the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, and remember what He did for us.

In Revelation 5, John transports us from Patmos' prison colony mines to the highest point of heaven to let us gaze at a moment yet future. We are at the throne of

judgment, and on the throne is the Judge of all, who is getting ready to take back the control of this earth that is reeling out of control toward destruction.

Chapter 5 is written in two distinct parts: verses 1–5 declare the utter unworthiness of mankind in the sight of God; verses 6–14 magnify the utter worthiness of the Lamb. This beautiful old hymn well contrasts both parts.

**“Man of Sorrows,” What a Name!**

*“Man of sorrows!” what a name  
For the Son of God who came  
Ruined sinners to reclaim!  
Hallelujah, what a Savior!*

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned He stood,  
Sealed my pardon with His blood;  
Hallelujah, what a Savior!*

*Guilty, vile, and helpless we,  
Spotless Lamb of God was He;  
Full atonement! Can it be?  
Hallelujah, what a Savior!*

*Lifted up was He to die,  
“It is finished,” was His cry;  
Now in heaven exalted high,  
Hallelujah, what a Savior!*

*When He comes, our glorious King,  
All His ransomed home to bring,  
Then anew this song we’ll sing,  
Hallelujah, what a Savior!*

—Philip P. Bliss (1838–1876)

Can you honestly sing “Hallelujah, what a Savior!” to Jesus Christ? This is what admiring the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ is about—acknowledging the greatness of what He accomplished at Calvary. You can find peace at the judgment of God by recognizing your unworthiness and guilt before His holy throne, bowing and worshiping the utter worthiness of the Lamb, who is your perfect substitute!

**My Prayer for You This Week:** *Thank You, oh Father in Heaven, for the all-together perfect sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, the worthy Lamb. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for being the next of kin to us, our kinsman Redeemer. Thank You for taking upon yourself the form of a servant in the likeness of human flesh. Thank You for humbling yourself and becoming obedient, even to the point of taking our frailty and our weakness and clothing yourself in the veil of Your fallen creatures. Thank You that You are not only next of kin but You were willing and able to redeem us. You wanted to redeem us; You loved us so much that you came to die, and You gave Your blood, Your life. You became sin for us. We admire the perfections of Your sacrifice. We want to admire them through worshiping You. I pray that in a very real sense You would meet with us today,*

*speaking to us through Your Word. Open our hearts to the wonder of Your perfect sacrifice. As we track through these verses of Your blessed Word this week, You have promised that we would be blessed for reading it, hearing it, and that You would open our understanding. As we understand Your Word, may we in the greatest sense of our lives admire Christ's perfect sacrifice. We thank You, worthy Lamb of God, Lord Jesus, Root of David! In Your precious name we pray. Amen.*

## **MONDAY: The Utter Unworthiness of Mankind**

*And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “**Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?**” And **no one** in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.*

—Revelation 5:1–3, emphasis added

If you were living in the first century, a scroll with “seven seals” had special meaning. In New Testament times, to protect a will from tampering, Roman law required that it had to be sealed seven times. As it was rolled up, the will was sealed every turn or so, for seven times. The seals were not to be broken until after the person who made the will had died. “Seven,” the number in Scripture that speaks of “spiritual perfection or completion,” reminds us that Revelation 5 represents the perfect time of completion for the scroll to be opened.

These scriptures describe the official document that declares the climax of human history.

- **God has prewritten the future:** *“The former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them” (Isaiah 42:9).*
- **Ezekiel saw the same scroll:** *Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. Then He spread it before me; and there was writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe (Ezekiel 2:9–10).*
- **Daniel did not understand:** *Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, “My lord, what shall be the end of these things?” And he said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (Daniel 12:8–9).*

The scroll before God's throne represents Christ's title deed to all that the Father promised Jesus because of His sacrifice on the cross: *“Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession” (Psalm 2:8).*

The title deed belongs to the Heir, the only One who has the right to take back the earth: *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things (Hebrews 1:1–2).*

**No person is worthy to open the scroll:** *So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it* (Revelation 5:4). All humanity falls short of God's glory. No one is worthy among all the pharaohs, Caesars, khans, generals, dictators, and emperors. They, and all their subjects, fail to measure up to God's standard. All have died and have turned to dust.

No one on this sin-cursed earth has ever been born sinless except for One who did not have an earthly father. He was virgin born, and that is why the virgin birth of Christ is so important. Adam's entire race is fallen. We are sinners by birth and by choice, so God declares every one of us to be sinners except for one—Jesus Christ. No one is good enough to stand beside Jesus and to undo the scroll, for *“There is none righteous, no, not one”* (Romans 3:10).

Our redemption depends totally on Jesus. For Acts 4:12 says: *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* Upon whom are you depending?

## **TUESDAY: The Utter Worthiness of Christ**

*But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, **the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed** to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”*

—Revelation 5:5, emphasis added

Revelation 5:5 contains two truths: (1) The identity of Jesus is perfect; He triumphed over sin, death, and the devil; and (2) the location of Jesus is perfect; He is perfectly positioned. We will discuss the first truth today, and then cover the second in tomorrow's devotional.

**“The Lion of Judah” identifies Jesus perfectly.** As Jacob was speaking his last words, he prophesied the result of his son's choices: *“Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people”* (Genesis 49:9–10, emphasis added).

**“The Root of David” identifies Jesus perfectly.** (See Isaiah 11:1–10 and 61:1.) Christ is called the Son of David, but He is also the source of David because He existed before David. Consider this exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees: *While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” They said to Him, “The Son of David.” He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool?” If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore* (Matthew 22:41–46).

The scribes and Pharisees could not understand what Jesus told them because they did not understand God. Christ is the promised Shiloh, the Root from which David derived his authority, and the son of David from which He got the legal kingly descent to rule over the Jews. And this same Son of David *“has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals”* (5:5).

**How did Jesus prevail?** He is our beloved kinsman Redeemer in the book of Ruth because He was willing to give His life to set us free from bondage and to restore our lost inheritance. The book of Ruth is one of the most powerful presentations of Jesus Christ as our perfect kinsman Redeemer.

Only Jesus as the *“heir of all things”* (Hebrews 1:2) meets all the qualifications to become our kinsman Redeemer (see Leviticus 25:23–46): *“If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold some of his possession, and if his redeeming relative comes to redeem it, then he may redeem what his brother sold”* (Leviticus 25:25).

The Old Testament is a huge wealth of background information for understanding the New Testament. The Bible of the apostles and the Lord Jesus Christ was the Old Testament. Jesus showed himself to His disciples in the Old Testament. In Acts 28, Paul was in prison in Rome, but he spent two years convincing people from the Old Testament of the deity of Christ. Can you do that? The kinsman redeemer is someone who takes a helpless, hopeless person and brings them under His wing.

Here is Christ in the book of Ruth: Boaz said to Ruth, *“The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge. . . . Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “Blessed be he [Boaz] of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!” And Naomi said to her, “This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives”* (Ruth 2:12, 20).

Do you remember the story of Ruth? Naomi and her husband, Elimelech, went to Moab because of famine in Judah. Their sons, Mahlon and Chilion, married Ruth and Orpah, who were Moabite women. After Naomi’s sons and husband died, she returned to Judah with her daughter-in-law, Ruth. They were widows who had no one to take care of them, so they went to look for their kinsman redeemer. The first of kin was not willing and able, so he turned over his right to Boaz. Boaz married Ruth, and they became the great-great-grandparents of King David.

Ruth 4:4–6 tells us that a kinsman redeemer had to be three things: (1) closely related to the one in need; (2) willing and able to take the responsibility to redeem; and (3) able to pay the price of redemption.

You and I are like Ruth and Naomi; we are helpless and hopeless. We have lost our inheritance and are living in bondage. Therefore, we need a kinsman Redeemer who is next of kin to us and is able to pay the price of redemption. Jesus became one of us by taking on human flesh, so He is our **close kinsman Redeemer**. Jesus loved us and was willing to lay down His life for us, so He is our **willing Redeemer**. And Jesus paid the price of our sin with His own body and blood, so He is our **abundantly able Redeemer** who is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him (Hebrews 7:25).

In this manner Jesus Christ prevailed. Thus, when He walked up to the throne of judgment, it could rightfully be said of Him: *“the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals”* (Revelation 5:5).

As kinsman Redeemer, Jesus is utterly worthy of praise because He bought all our liabilities and all our sins to the end of our lives! Hallelujah, what a Savior!

## WEDNESDAY: Jesus-The Right Person in the Right Place

*But He . . . has an unchangeable priesthood. . . . **He is . . . able to save to the uttermost** those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*

—Hebrews 7:24–25, emphasis added

Jesus is in heaven as our mediator. God the Son, who has been given “*all authority*” (Matthew 28:18), stands before the throne of God as omnipotent.

**The location of Jesus is perfect—He is perfectly positioned** *in the midst of the throne* [Jesus is located in heaven] *and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth* (Revelation 5:6).

In verse 6, “*the seven Spirits of God*” does not teach that there are seven Holy Spirits. Rather, there is one sevenfold Spirit, described in Isaiah 11:2 as: (1) the Spirit of the Lord; (2) the Spirit of wisdom; (3) the Spirit of understanding; (4) the Spirit of counsel; (5) the Spirit of strength; (6) the Spirit of knowledge; and (7) the Spirit of the fear of the Lord.

The description of the Lamb, if produced literally by an artist, would provide a grotesque picture, but when understood symbolically, it conveys spiritual truth. Since seven is the number of perfection, Jesus is **omnipotent**—He has **perfect power** (seven horns); Jesus is **omniscient**—He has **perfect wisdom** (seven eyes); and Jesus is **omnipresent**—He is **perfectly present** (seven Spirits in all the earth).

Jesus is standing in the right place, as the right person, and is identified to be the Lamb of God. He is not a great angel, or Satan’s brother, as the Mormons teach. He is not merely a great created being, as Jehovah’s Witnesses claim. Nor is He simply a noble man, as the liberals would have us believe. Neither is He just a great prophet, as Muslims propose. Christ Jesus has all the attributes of Deity: He is the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Son of God!

In Revelation 5:6–8, Jesus was promised as the perfect Lamb. He is called a Lamb (like a little pet lamb in contrast to a big sheep) no less than twenty-eight times in Revelation. A ram was substituted for Isaac (Genesis 22:8, 13), which is a picture of Christ giving His life for the individual (see Galatians 2:20). At Passover, the lamb was slain for each family (Exodus 12:3). Isaiah states that Jesus died for the nation of Israel (Isaiah 53:8; see also John 11:49–52).

John affirms that the Lamb died for the whole world (John 1:29). Peter said, “*You were not redeemed with corruptible things, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*” (1 Peter 1:18–19). The more you meditate on the power and scope of Christ’s work on the cross, the more humbled and worshipful you should become.

**The action of Jesus is perfect.** In Revelation 5:7, Jesus takes the title deed as the exalted Lord of glory: “*Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.*” Jesus stepped up to take the scroll, for He had paid the price as the perfect kinsman Redeemer, the heir of all things.

**The reception of Jesus is perfect.** In Revelation 5:8, Jesus hears and keeps all our prayers: *Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*

I love that verse—especially for those of us who are declining in health. Prayers are vital to God, and those of you who have extra time due to health problems can have a dynamic ministry of prayer! God loves to answer prayer, and He blesses churches whose people pray for all aspects of their ministry, and seek to glorify Him in everything. What a perfect love gift you can offer Him in behalf of others!

## **THURSDAY: The Elements of Christ's Perfection**

*And they sang a new song, saying: “**You are worthy** to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”*

—Revelation 5:9, emphasis added

In Revelation 5:9, a glorious new song about the plan of Jesus is sung: “*You are worthy to take the scroll* [worship of Jesus], *and to open its seals* [authority of Jesus]; *for You were slain* [substitutionary death of Jesus], *and have redeemed us to God by Your blood* [redemption of Jesus], *out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation* [gospel of Jesus], *and have made us kings and priests to our God* [ministry for Jesus]; *and we shall reign on the earth* [hope in Jesus].”

In that song we can also see the elements of good Christian music. To truly honor Christ, we must be careful to check the content of what we sing or listen to because there are many new “crossover” songs in modern music that only talk about the Lord but never name Him. We should avoid songs that don’t name the name that is above every name—the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! Christ-honoring music will include some or all of the following: worship of Jesus, the authority of Jesus, the substitutionary death of Jesus, the redemption of Jesus, the gospel of Jesus, ministry for Jesus, and the sharing of hope in Jesus.

In Revelation 5:11–12 the perfect sacrifice of Jesus is received. All heaven then breaks forth in celebration of His perfect character: *I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive **power** and **riches** and **wisdom**, and **strength** and **honor** and **glory** and **blessing!**”* (emphasis added).

“*To receive power!*” Jesus came the first time as a weak and helpless baby, and Herod tried to murder Him. But when Jesus comes the second time, He will come as the omnipotent almighty God of the universe!

### **The Seven Elements of Christ's Perfections:**

1. **Power**—Jesus has all power in heaven and in earth.
2. **Riches**—Jesus, who owns all things, became poor for us. He laid aside all the treasures of heaven to walk on this earth as an itinerant prophet who was supported by gifts, but now He holds the ownership of the entire universe.

3. **Wisdom**—Jesus is the source of true wisdom. He was mocked, scoffed at, derided, and accused of everything evil that His enemies could think of, but now He stands as the wisdom of God.
4. **Strength**—Jesus is the mighty Lion of Judah. He was weary, thirsty, and tired at His first coming, but now He is the Rock, the fountain of the Water of Life, and the source of the power of an indestructible life.
5. **Honor**—Jesus shall be honored and every knee shall bow. At His first coming, He did not have a place to lay His head, but now countless myriads of eternal beings focus their adoration and worship on Him. Countless saints raise their voices in song, and the universe glistens and radiates with His glory.
6. **Glory**—Jesus is the highest of heaven adored. He showed His glory briefly on the Mount of Transfiguration, but now He shines as the brightness of the sun in its strength. All glory and honor is His! Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord of *all*!
7. **Blessing**—He is the One who produces real and eternal joy.

As you reflect upon the seven elements of Christ's perfections, I encourage you to quietly offer a song of worship to this precious Lamb of God!

## FRIDAY: The Lamb Who Overcomes

*"Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren . . . has been cast down. And **they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb** and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to death."*

—Revelation 12:10–11, emphasis added

Now that we have seen Christ as the perfect sacrifice, consider these other wonderful references to the Lamb of God:

- **Jesus is the wrathful Lamb:** *[They] said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"* (Revelation 6:16).
- **Jesus is the worshiped Lamb:** *"The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes"* (Revelation 7:17).
- **Jesus is the warring Lamb:** *"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful"* (Revelation 17:14).
- **Jesus—"God with us"—rejoices at the wedding of the Lamb:** *Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God"* (Revelation 19:9).

Do you admire the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ? Do you admire the worthy Lamb that was slain? From your heart and lips, do you attribute to Him power, riches,

wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing? Like the blind Fanny Crosby, is this song your heartfelt prayer?

### **Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross**

*Jesus, keep me near the cross,  
There a precious fountain,  
Free to all, a healing stream,  
Flows from Calv'ry's mountain.*

*Near the cross, a trembling soul,  
Love and mercy found me;  
There the Bright and Morning Star  
Shed His beams around me.*

*Near the cross! O Lamb of God,  
Bring its scenes before me;  
Help me walk from day to day  
With its shadow o'er me.*

*Near the cross! I'll watch and wait,  
Hoping, trusting ever,  
Till I reach the golden strand,  
Just beyond the river.*

*In the cross, in the cross  
Be my glory ever,  
Till my ransomed soul shall find  
Rest beyond the river.*

—Fanny Crosby (1820–1915)

### **SATURDAY: Our Triumphant Lamb of Glory**

*“Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, **I am alive forevermore**. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.”*

—Revelation 1:17–18, emphasis added

Let's now see the Lamb of God in five stations as He brings to completion God's plan of the ages. When you worship, worship this wonderful Lamb of Revelation!

1. **The Lamb walks in the midst of His Church** (Revelation 1:11–18). He reveals himself in these wonderful ways: the Lamb is royal in splendor (1:13); the Lamb is purity and ancient wisdom (1:14); the Lamb is revealed with His power displayed (1:15–16); and the Lamb is revealed with His purpose defined (1:18).
2. **The Lamb waits at the door** (Revelation 3:14–22). Jesus is calling to us: *“I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me”* (3:20). Remember: Jesus is standing outside the door, knocking. However, He will not come in without being invited. If we open that door, He promises to dine lingeringly with us, which speaks of a time of sweet communion with Him.

3. **The Lamb is worthy of praise** (Revelation 4:11–5:14). “*You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created*” (4: 11). His position in the throne room of heaven is that of Creator; all that was done is for His pleasure. He was slain for man’s sin, and is the heir to the universe. Because of this we see the rights He receives in Revelation 5:11–12: *power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing*. This Lion of Judah is mighty, and He shall be honored; every knee shall bow and give Him glory, for He is the highest of heaven adored. And finally there is blessing—He is that which produces real and eternal joy. What is the response of all the universe in Revelation 5:13–14? The same as what ours should be; all creatures praise Him, and the whole universe and “*the four beasts*” worship Him.
4. **The Lamb wars against sinful men** (Revelation 19:11–20:15). In this scene we worship our Lamb of glory as we see Him triumphing during the Tribulation war. As commander of the armies of heaven, He appears for battle with clothing that is of vestures dipped in blood. He is called the Word of God, and conquers the kings of the earth and chains Satan. In Revelation 20:7–15, we see Him again as He finishes up the final postmillennial war. The key events are: Satan is loosed; the millennial last generation follows his deceptions; they are destroyed, face judgment, then go into eternity without Christ!
5. **The Lamb triumphantly welcomes the redeemed** (Revelation 22:1–21). This final glimpse of Jesus as the Lamb starts at God’s throne as the source of the Water of Life, and ends at the seat of the Father and Lamb. Jesus, our Lamb, is the One who offers the tree by the river that brings healing. He declares the eternal triumph, and that there will be no more curse; His servants will now be free to offer unhindered service to Him. Revelation ends with the testimony that He is the Light who was revealed to those who keep His sayings. And because He is a great Savior, His last offer is one of mercy and compassion: *Let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely* (v. 17).

**Make a choice to live in hope:** This same Lamb of God walks in the midst of His churches today. He is waiting and watching to see if we are willing to open the door to Him that He may commune with us. All must, and shall, bow before Him in praise of His name above every name. And soon, He, the Lord of glory—the pet Lamb slain for the sin of the whole world—shall welcome each and every redeemed one to dwell with Him forever. Have you found the living hope that can be yours as you admire Christ’s perfect sacrifice at the cross?

Perhaps you can identify with Robert Wolgemuth’s story about a couple’s retreat years ago in which one of the speakers revealed how he had a life-changing meeting at Christ’s cross.

Just a few years out of seminary, John was preparing to lead his small congregation in a special Good Friday worship service. He had prepared a short sermon that he truly hoped would stir them. All alone in a small room, the young priest was getting ready. . . . He slipped into robes, zipping and hooking them securely. He pulled the colorful stole over his head and adjusted it perfectly. A full-length mirror stood in the corner of the room. Father Powell couldn’t help

himself. He turned and stood facing the glass, filled with a kind of pious presumption he had never felt before. Not like this. . . .

Through the door, John could hear the organ starting the prelude. . . . He slowly began to move toward it when something caught his eye. Right above the door was a crucifix—Jesus Christ, hanging on the cross. Unlike the handsome priest's, the Savior's vestments were nothing more than a loincloth. His stole was His nakedness. A crown of thorns was pressed into the flesh of His head. The only color on the image was from His precious blood. Nothing could have looked more pathetic.

The priest hesitated. . . . In a moment his shock turned to embarrassment, then abject shame. He fell to his knees. "What am I doing here?" the priest cried aloud, burying his face in his hands. "Oh, please forgive me, my Holy Father," he wept. "I am not worthy even to kneel in Your holy presence. How could I dare to stand . . . or to speak?" . . . A simple glimpse of the cross had not only prepared John for this moment, but had seared a permanent image in his mind of the Crucified One.

It was at this moment that Father John Powell was truly ready to worship.<sup>1</sup>

### **When I Survey the Wondrous Cross**

*When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

*Forbid it Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God:  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.*

*See, from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down:  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all. Amen.*

—Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

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<sup>1</sup> Joni Eareckson Tada, et al., "At the Heart of the Hymn," *What Wondrous Love is This* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002), pp. 115–17.