

Revelation: A Renewed Imagination

April 8, 2018

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Ephesians 4:21-24

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship.)

Read Ephesians 4:21-24 using the prayer practice of Lectio Divina. Read the passage aloud 3 times. After each reading, spend a few minutes reflecting. After the first reading, open yourself to the presence of God. On the second reading, listen for a certain word or phrase that stands out to you. On the third reading, listen to what God's invitation might be for you.

Icebreaker

What kind of books do you like to read (fiction, non-fiction, sci-fi, mystery, fantasy etc..) and why?

Text for Discussion: Revelation 1:1-8

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Revelation targets our imagination unlike any other book of the Bible. And although it's been known to provoke confusion, fear and frenzy, no other book presents Christ so vividly and compellingly. It offers us a bigger, grander view of Jesus. No matter what any of us is going through, it's a vision of the Lord we need to see, as it will stretch, exercise and renew our imaginations, offering a glimpse of God's heavenly perspective. Read rightly, no book is more encouraging than Revelation.

What kind of book is Revelation? It is literally "The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ," which simply means the unveiling of Jesus to the world; Christ is both the source and content of the revelation. This book seeks to unveil the unseen reality of the present, calling us to look at the world from a new, transcendent point of view. More is going on in God's creation than meets the unaided eye, and Revelation calls us to use our imaginations to call to mind what is very real but unseen, what is eternal but enduring.

This book is also a prophecy – a declaration (rather than a prediction), for the concern of prophecy is always the present moment. God is making His will known to us, telling us what He wants us to hear, see, and do *now*. Revelation is also a letter – the longest of the Bible. John is writing to the churches of Asia as their pastor, encouraging them to keep following Christ. He isn't presenting new information to his readers; the letter seeks to give us a new way to process what we already know, so we might see and understand Jesus in a way we haven't before.

Who is this book intended for? At the time of its writing, the persecution of Christians was becoming more frequent. John writes to encourage those suffering for their faith. Christianity has stopped working for them because the pain they're enduring doesn't make sense to them in light of Christ's victory over death. God's promises seem hollow now that life has become hard. And so they doubt. But John is also writing to those whose faith has grown stale and complacent – those slipping into conformity and compromise with the world at the expense of their witness to it. The graphic images of Revelation are meant to shock them into a humbled awareness.

Why should we study this book? If the worries of conformity and compromise were true 2000 years ago, they are no less relevant today. Through this wisdom literature. John promises we shall be on the right path when we derive the meaning of our lives and how we should live from the character of God, His rules, and His holy will. The path may be dangerous and unclear at times, but it is still where we should be. It is a good and blessed thing to endure, walking in the pathway of God's will.

We are being called to look beyond ourselves. Christ's life, death and resurrection are historical realities that

reframe how we experience our personal histories, circumstances and trials. No book of the Bible gives a more vivid and compelling vision of who Jesus is. And each of us needs this fresh vision of Christ: to see Jesus as our hero, who is our ever-present savior, and to see the blessings found in lives spent following Him.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

How can the book of Revelation help re-frame our life?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

Opening Questions/Digging In...

- What comes to mind when you think of the book of Revelation in the Bible?
 - What excites you about studying Revelation?
 - What are you apprehensive about studying Revelation?
- How does understanding the meaning of “apocalypse” help the reader understand Revelation?
- What two types of people is John writing to in the book of Revelation?
 - Which one do you identify with and why?
- The book of Revelation is the unveiling of the reality of the risen Christ living and at work in the world today. Scan Rev. 1:1-8 again. How does John describe the risen Christ in these eight verses?
 - Which description captures your attention most?
- Rankin mentioned that prophesy is not always what’s coming in the future but what God wants us to hear now. Looking over these verses what does God want you to know now?
 - What does He want you to know in times of distress?
- John is calling his readers to be faithful witnesses (vs. 3), to walk in the way of Jesus. What areas of life might Jesus be calling you to follow him?
- John doesn’t deny the challenging realities of his world. What he discovers is that things are not only as they seem. In light of the challenges you are facing, what comfort, if any, do you draw from the opening verses of Revelation 1?
- Looking at vs. 7, what practical effect does the promise of Jesus’ return at the end of time have on how you live your life? How does it affect your faith?

Application Questions

- What spiritual discipline could you engage in that would help you have a bigger vision of Jesus in your life this week?
- What spiritual discipline could you engage in that would help you to walk in the path of God’s will?
- What spiritual discipline could you engage in that would help you endure any present sufferings or trials?

Experiment of the week

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

- Engage in one new spiritual discipline this week based on your answers to the questions above.
 - Come to CG next week ready to discuss the impact the discipline had on you during the week.