

Revelation: Living Life Falling Down and Casting Crowns

May 6, 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: Psalm 27:4-6

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

Read Psalm 27:4-6 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

Do you have a favorite painting or picture? What are the colors? How does it make you feel?

Text for Discussion: Revelation 4:1-11

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Whatever our background, whatever our circumstances, whatever ails or worries us – each of us needs to see a vision of the beauty of God on His throne. We need this more than anything. In Revelation 4, John shares a glimpse of Heaven, which (even for him) lies nearly beyond description. Like an impressionist painting, it is a work of art, leading with colors and sounds and a sense of awe. And at the center of it all: God on His throne.

Revelation answers the question of who is in control of our world. It's an easy thing to question when facing with suffering and very evident evil both in the news and in our own lives. For Jesus, the dark shadow of Satan is indeed very real, but Revelation assures us that God alone has sovereignty, power and control over His creation. He sits enthroned over these tempestuous seas, even though they are contrary to His own goodness. Our Father has utterly tamed these evils, and His plans cannot and will not fail – bringing good out of all that is painful, unjust and heartbreaking.

In the midst of such evil and violence, it's easy – even natural – to react with fear or rage. But we must learn (as the writer of Psalm 27 did) to seek the face of God and to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. Doing so takes our eyes off our own circumstances and emotions. This is a gift of worship and a potent antidote to fear and anxiety. For God alone deserves our worship. Placing anything on the throne other than our Creator will wear us out and ultimately poison us. Only the beauty of God gives us the rest and joy we so desperately crave.

God's total and complete holiness is the most beautiful thing about Him. As we open our eyes wide to this, we'll inevitably find ourselves falling down before Him. By doing this, we release our strengths, achievements, reputation, and even our own dignity in blessed self-forgetfulness. John's vision models this: Every living creature in the universe – when it's doing what it was created for – is worshipping and praising God, day and night. He is worthy of worship by any and all creatures throughout the universe. Our God is that big!

Jesus has opened the door to the beauty of God. He ushers us into God's presence, allowing us to do so because of His sacrificial, atoning death. Because of Jesus, we can receive mercy and find grace in our time of need. Because of Jesus, our prayers are heard. Because of Jesus, they are answered. Because of Jesus, we can draw near to our Father, Who is a very present help in the midst of our troubles. And by taking our eyes off our circumstances and fixing them on God's beauty, we will begin to live with worship as a way of life.

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.)

Why is the vision of the beauty of God what we most need?

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...

- After reading Rev 4:1-11, what stood out to you?
 - What features in John's vision stand out to you?
 - What did you learn from the passage that you didn't know before?
- What does the throne symbolize in Revelation?
 - How does it help you to know that God is ultimately in control of human history?
 - Do you believe there is anything outside of God's power? Why or why not?
- In what ways is the Lord God and His throne described?
 - Why is it fitting for a rainbow to encircle the throne of God based on Genesis 9:12-16?
- What does this passage say about who God is and how he relates to His creation?
- What might you be worshipping in your life that isn't God?
- Discuss how this overwhelming vision of God is so needed for people who are suffering, fearful, or might be in apathetic boredom.
 - What about this vision might help you, a family member or a friend right now?
 - If anyone other than you, how would you encourage them?

Application Questions

- How does worshipping God cast out fear and anxiety?
- What does it look like to fall down before God?
 - How could you make this a way of life?
- What things in your life do you need to cast down before God?
 - How can we help each other do that?
- What spiritual disciplines can you engage in to help you worship God this week?
- What circumstances in your life do you need to have reframed by gazing at God's beauty?

Experiment of the week

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

Spend the week focusing on God's beauty. Read scripture on God's beauty, spend time in God's creation, spend time with other people who are made in God's image. During the week keep a journal and come to the group next week to share about your experience.