

Revelation: Evil and the Justice of God

May 20, 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: One Thing by Darlene Joyce Zschech, and Marty Sampson

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

I tasted the world seen more than enough
It's promises fleeting
Of water and wine I emptied the cup
And found myself wanting

But there is a well that never runs dry
The water of life the blood of the vine

Cause all I know is
Everything I have means nothing
Jesus if You're not my one thing
Everything I need right now
All I need is You right now

Just one thing I ask and this I will seek
If only to know You
To be where You are and go where You lead
My God I will follow

The things of this world I've counted as loss
I lay it all down to take up this cross

Cause all I know is
Everything I have means nothing
Jesus if You're not my one thing
Everything I need right now

Cause all I want is
Everything You are and nothing
Jesus if You're not my one thing
Everything to me right now

And I'll sing
Whoa whoa
I want nothing but to know You
And to be with You my God X2

Icebreaker

Describe the worst earthquake you have ever experienced. How did the experience make you feel?

Text for Discussion: Revelation 6-8

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

The vision of Revelation 5 culminates with angels and every living creature singing together, "*To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!*" Our victory in Christ is certain, but this does not explain away the corrupt power, war, famine and death we see. These evils (envisioned as the four horsemen) have unfortunate parts to play in God's unfolding, redemptive plan held within the scroll. As its seven seals are opened, we see the consequences of rejecting God's way.

The First Seal: The first horse is power corrupted. The Bible insists evil is only allowed to operate under parameters granted by God, and it will somehow one day serve God's purposes.

The Second Seal: The second horse is war, conflict and strife. Spiritual evil and physical violence are always interrelated. There is a war going on. We have an enemy, but it is not one another.

The Third Seal: The third horse is the specter of famine, greed, economic exploitation, and injustice.

The Fourth Seal: Tyranny, war and famine ride alongside death, the final horse. Yes, the Lamb is on the throne, but evil is still on the loose. These horsemen must ride over the earth in order to be dealt with. Just as we must honestly confront the depths of wickedness in our own hearts so there can be lasting healing. If on the cross God

was able to transform all evil into the greatest good, then God can still do that today. The Lamb can weave all things into the pattern of God's gracious and redemptive purposes.

The Fifth Seal: Martyrs die in confidence that Christ is the ultimate truth. It is their witness that brings so many to faith, and still more will die so the Gospel can go forth over all the earth. The Lamb conquered through bearing injustice and suffering love. So in following Him, we must do the same – in patient endurance, prizing the salvation and healing of those who have hurt us over our own need for justice.

The Sixth Seal: Natural calamities signify the overthrow of human pride. In them, God reveals the result of our desire to be our own god. For the Lamb not only shows us the love of God; it also reveals His wrath. The cross declares God's victory, but it's also the judgment rendered against humanity by God standing in our place.

God provides an escape from these horrors. Our fitness to stand in His presence is only because of our faith in the sacrificial death of Christ for our sins (John 3:36, Rev 7:10). "The Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes," (Rev 7:17). These words are true now, but one day we will see Him and know it was all worth it.

The Seventh Seal: The incense of John's vision shows God's delight in receiving our prayers. He hears His people as we pour out our hearts to Him. The power of prayer is colossal, able to move the mountains of the world and the mountain that is our own heart. For our Father is full of love, and He listens to His children.

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.)

Does the love and power of God work in this world?

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 6-8, what stood out to you?
 - Which seal opening makes the greatest impression on you? Why?
- Why is the Lamb able to open the scroll?
 - What do you learn about the Lamb and His way, the little way?
- Looking at the six seals, what happens when each one is opened?
 - What message is given with the opening of the 6 seals?
- What comes to mind when you think of God's attribute of being just?
 - How is God's justice merciful?
- As the Lamb opened the seven seals of the scroll, John was shown God's redemptive plan for the world that includes the very worst side of evil, catastrophe and human suffering (Seals 1-4, 6). He was also shown the very best of the highest of heaven (Seals 5, 7). How does this help us to remain calm with everything that is going on in our world today?
- Answer the question, "Who can stand?". How are these people identified? (see Rev. 7:9-10 and compare with John 3:36)
- Discuss how Rev 7:16-17 comfort you now or has specifically comforted you in a past circumstance.

Application Questions

- In what areas of your life are you wanting to be your own god?
 - Where might you be lacking trust? Or what are you having trouble believing?
- What would it look like for you to live the way of the Lamb?
- While we wait "a little longer" we pray. How does this sermon and passage encourage you to pray differently?
- What spiritual disciplines can you engage in to help you live the way of the lamb this week?

Experiment of the week

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

Keep track of how you choose to live the way of the Lamb this week and share with the group how you and others were benefited.