

Village Guide

Current Series: The Dragon and the Sea #3

Texts: Revelation 1.9-11 and Rev. 5

Core Value Focus: Peacemaking, Transformation

Big Ideas from the Message:

- Revelation and Worship
 - Revelation has 3 broad aims: worship of Jesus, uncivil resistance to empire and evil, and inviting the church to be a living witness of the beauty of God and the Kingdom.
- The last book of the Bible is...
 - A Revelation
 - of* Jesus
 - to* John
 - for* the church
 - against* the Empire
 - during* the 1st Century
- Revelation 1.9-11
- Each of the 7 cities where there was a church had spaces dedicated to the worship of the emperors, Roma (the goddess of Rome), Pax (the god of peace... through violent conquest), and Victory/Nike (the goddess of triumph over other nations).
- Revelation 5.
- Everyone expected a Lion to defeat Victory; instead victory “defeated” a Lamb.
- Worship belongs to a slaughtered little Lamb.
- “Power has been gained by means of self-surrender and even death. This victory, in contrasting to the victories of armies and of lions, is a victory of love, of giving of self, of suffering. Undoubtedly, this image is presented to Christians in the suffering churches of Asia so that they may know that quite possibly through those very sufferings that seem to be a sign of defeat they are achieving the greatest of victories. Like the Lamb, Christians must conquer by means of love and giving of self.” Justo Gonzalez, *Three Months With Revelation*, 53
- Giving our allegiance over to anything other than the Lamb risks justifying the cycle of “victory.”
- Revelation pulls back the curtain of the cosmos to show us who sits on the throne of the universe.
- We are invited to lay down our crowns, our impulses for coercive “victories,” at the feet of Jesus.

CONNECT (5 min)

- Question chosen for group discussion or someone pre-invited to share their story. (Optional)

HEAR (5 min)

- Spend some time in your group sharing what you recall from Sunday’s message. Give a loose theme or subject of the sermon to jumpstart everyone’s thoughts and recollections. (Example: *On Sunday, Kurt (or another speaker) started/continued our series. Who was there on Sunday? Can you recap the content for us? What struck you, and what questions did it leave you with?*)

TALK (20 min)

*Note: This format is intentionally less linear in an effort to generate discussion. It is not meant to be followed left-to-right, nor do all the questions need to be asked. As a facilitator, stewarding good discussion means modeling **true listening**, which also means a conversation without an agenda. Use your discernment to see what your group needs to talk about.*

Conceptual	Practical Implications	Spiritual Formation
Scripture	Regular Life	Transformation
<p>Take time to read Revelation 4 and 5 out loud. Close your eyes if it helps you imagine the scene.</p> <p>Revelation uses heavy laden imagery to communicate important truths about reality. Although it isn't to be taken as absolutely literal, Revelation does point us toward what is real. What pops through this text as being "real" about God?</p> <p>This passage shows us behind the curtain of the cosmos. When revealed, we see a Lion who is able to conquer as others might have expected, but instead the image reverses itself to become a weak slaughtered baby lamb. What does this say about how God resists evil in Jesus? Why is this great reversal (love instead of might, nonviolence instead of violence) set in the context of worship? What are we invited to admire about God?</p>	<p>Have you ever had an experience that was "different" (in a positive sense) than an average or normal time of worship? What was that like?</p> <p>What is your experience like when it comes to worshipping Jesus? We often think of this only as music or communion, but for the earliest Christians, all of life could be played to the rhythm of worship. How does this broader frame of reference challenge or complement how you experience God on a regular basis?</p> <p>Sometimes we are tempted to give into the "cycle of 'victory'" rather than to the reversal of violence we see in the Lion-to-slaughtered-Lamb motif. We all have the influence of the empire within us to some degree. Kurt shared about how sometimes people struggle with trying to manipulate their individual 'world' to be safer or something more manageable. Subtly, a form of coercion sometimes can come into play. Do you ever find yourself defaulting to the cycle of victory and how might Jesus invite you to lay this down?</p>	<p><i>Take a few minutes of silence to think of what your current experience of life these past couple weeks have been like. (Give a few minutes for reflection before asking the question).</i></p> <p>How do you sense that the forces of metaphorical "empire" shaped your last week? How might worship (in a broad sense and on Sundays) empower you to live connected to Jesus?</p> <p>Can you think of a space, in your regular routine, where you might implement a spiritual practice to help connect you to God? (Worship music as you commute, pray as you go podcast, audio bible, intentional prayer time, etc)</p> <p>How does reading Revelation through its genre and in its first century setting cultivate a healthier picture of God? How does this connect to your story and to your personal and communal experience of Jesus?</p>

(Space for your own questions or notes)

LIVE (20 min)

- How might this conversation impact you this next week? What are you taking with you?
- How might we pray for each other based on this conversation and other highs/lows in life?