

When the Lion Turns Out to Be a Lamb

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- [0 : 0 0] We are in a series on the book of Revelation, and we're talking about this series of last words at the back of our Bibles that some of us maybe grew up adoring and loving and building charts on and getting all the study Bibles that you could about the book of Revelation.
- Hello. Or some of us avoid and don't know what to do with because it's weird. And we are exploring how do we as radical Jesus followers, people who believe in human rights and human dignity and all loving God, what do we do with this weird and wacky book?
- And, you know, it's 2,000 years old. It's an old book. Most all of your Bible is 2,000 years old or older, and you have to deal with language barriers and context barriers and culture barriers.
- And that's hard to do when you're talking about something that's 2,000 years old. It's also hard to do when you're talking about things that are maybe 30, 40 years old. Go ahead and put that next slide up on the screen. Teddy is doing our slides today. I gave him like 55 slides, so bear with us. What is that?
- Cheers. What is it? Yeah, floppy disk. That's the save icon. How many here have never held a floppy disk in their hands? A few, yeah, a couple of you, a few of you. Yeah, this is quickly becoming a relic of things that we don't touch or deal with anymore, but it becomes the universal save icon and move forward another 10, 20, 30 years, and that's still the save icon.
- [1 : 2 9] Somebody's going to know it as the save icon and not know that it represents a real, physical, tangible object in reality from not that long ago when you like played Oregon Trail and your DOS or, you know, whatever.
- Okay? Now, let's also talk about the Flowrider lyrics. Shoddy had them apple-bottom jeans, boots with the fur. The whole club was looking at hair.
- Now, now, here's the question. Here's the question. The boots with the fur, what does that mean? Does that mean the boots have fur or, next slide, as Reba McIntyre, boots with the fur.
- She's wearing boots and she's wearing a fur. Okay? Which one is it? The first one? The boots that have the fur?
- All right. Now, you have to remember that the course has more words. Keep going. Oh, yeah. So, we also have some other evidence here. This is from the music video. Here are the boots. This is a long time ago, this music video, so it's in like 360p or something.
- [2 : 3 6] So, you can see this little bit. Here's some boots with some fur on them. But also, next slide. Okay. Apple-bottom jeans, boots with the fur. The whole club is looking at her, dot, dot, dot. The baggy sweatpants and the Reeboks with the straps with the straps.
- Now, some folks wonder, next slide. The girl flow writer sings about Lo is wearing apple-bottom jeans, boots with the fur, baggy sweatpants and Reeboks with the straps all at the same time.
- We must conclude that she was, in fact, a centaur. In this essay, I will. So, is it two women? Is it one woman wearing multiple kinds of shoes simultaneously?

Is it that she had, I got to log in here. Is it that she had boots and a fur? Now, fortunately, the person who collaborated with flow writer chimes in.

Next slide. And T-Pain says, the first girl is dressed how flow writer likes. Second girl is dressed how I like. Flow writer likes a classy lady. I like a lazy bee.

[3 : 35] So, there is a girl that's dressed fancy. Again, still ambiguous. Boots and a fur. Boots with the fur. And somebody who's just wearing the Reeboks with the straps like a toddler.

Okay? Now, that's, this is all just from a song that's like not only 20 or so years old. Now, here's some more like lyrics. Give me the 411. What does that mean? Give me the information.

Why does it mean that? Why does it mean that? Mumble, mumble, mumble. Yeah, you didn't Google things. You would call 411 and get information. Anybody remember having to call the movie theater to get like the times in the movie?

Anybody remember calling your local bank to get the time and temperature? And you have to like, you're setting the microwave. Or like, okay, it's 1213. Call the bank. Oh, it's 1214. Do it.

Now. Now. Okay? Don't touch that dial. What does that refer to? Not a thermostat. What? The radio or the television. Anybody grew up with a television that had the dial?

[4 : 35] The UHF, VHF. We'll talk about UHF in a minute here. Okay? Here's one of my favorite tweets. 2,000 years from now, people will not understand the difference between a butt dial and a booty call. And this is exactly why the Bible is hard to understand.

Has your mom ever told you, oh, I'm sorry, I booty called you? No, mom, you did not. You butt dialed me. That's very different. Now, I bring up all these contextual problems because these are all references that we get or we're on the verge of no longer getting.

My kids will not get these references because they're getting more and more and more dated. And that's just 20, 30 years old. When we're reading the book of Revelation, when we're reading any book of the Bible, we have to deal with the fact that we're dealing with cultural references that are far, far older.

And we have to do some work to understand what they mean. And just because we're doing that work doesn't mean that the original audience, when they read these references, wouldn't have immediately understood, I know what you're talking about.

So today we're taking a look at the book of Revelation chapters 4 and 5. You can join me with your Bibles, with your devices. We'll be going through some sort of chunks at a time.

[5 : 50] Revelation chapter 4 and 5. And we'll be exploring this centering vision at the core of the book of Revelation.

The centering vision from everything else is understood. So very briefly, we had the outline that I showed you last week. You have chapter 1, which is your opening vision.

Chapters 2 and 3, letters to the seven churches, which is what we explored last week. Then you have the major chunk of Revelation, chapters 4 through 20, this sort of heaven versus Babylon, war, battle, back and forth.

And then the closing vision of New Jerusalem in chapters 21 and 22. And then if you zoom in, chapters 4 through 20, you get these three sets of visions.

Each one that begins with a heavenly vision. A heavenly vision in chapters 4 and 5, 11 and 15, and 19 through 21. And then chapters 6 and 8, you have the seven seals, seven bulls, and a vision of the bride.

[6 : 49] And then chapters 8 and 11, you have seven trumpets, a vision of the harlot, and then the conclusion. And the thing that can make the book of Revelation sort of difficult to understand, one of many, is that it's a spiral structure.

So if you read it strictly as chronological, points in time move forward, you're going to have problems, especially if you are a speculator that's trying to use the book of Revelation to tell you exactly what the future is going to hold.

Rather, John is giving us this spiral structure, and each layer of the spiral is revealing more and more about reality. That there is, yes, there's the stuff that's happening on earth.

Revelation deals with real people who are actually dying, who are actually being martyred, who are actually being persecuted, and real empires that actually oppress and actually persecute.

And it's dealing with the reality on top of that, that if you open the door into the second reality, you see heaven and Babylon battling it out with a sure and certain conclusion in John's imagination.

[7 : 52] So last week, we read in Revelation chapter 3 verse 20, Jesus saying, listen, I am standing at the door and I am knocking. And that's basically the conclusion of the seven letters.

And then we transition into Revelation chapter 4, where John says, after this, look, and there in heaven a door stood open. Okay, so there's our transition from chapters 3, the letters to the seven churches, to chapter 4, this vision in heaven.

Jesus stands at the door and knocks. John says, look, I see an open door. And he's pulled into this vision in heaven. And a voice, the same voice of a trumpet from chapter 1 says, come up here.

I will show you what must take place after this. And this is the hinge moment of the entire book. Like everything before, John's intro vision, those letters to the churches, has been preparation.

And everything flows now from what John sees through the door. And this is where Revelation begins to get really bizarre and weird. So chapter 4, verse 1, John says, after this, I looked.

[9 : 01] And there in heaven a door stood open. And the first voice, which I heard, speaking to me like a trumpet, said, come up here and I will show you what must take place after this. At once I was in the Spirit and there in heaven stood a throne with one seated on the throne.

And the one seated there looks like jasper and carnelian. And around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald. Around the throne are 24 thrones. And seated on the thrones are 24 elders dressed in white robes with golden crowns on their heads.

And coming from the throne are flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder. And in front of the throne burns seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God. And in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne and on each side of the throne are the four living creatures full of eyes in front and back. The first living creature like a lion. The second living creature like an ox. The third with a face like a human.

The fourth like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside and day and night without ceasing. They sing, holy, holy, holy Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come.

[10 : 14] Now, this may sound unique, unusual, sort of strange to us. But it wasn't at all weird to John's original audience. Because they would have known their Hebrew Bible forwards and backwards.

I mean, not literally. Rabbis taught Jewish students their Bible forwards and backwards. So if you quoted a verse, you could be asked to quote the verse after it or before it.

And specifically, they would have been familiar with Ezekiel chapter 1, which was exile literature. And the Jews know lots about exile. So Ezekiel 1, Revelation 4, there is this back and forth.

You can see the comparison. That in Ezekiel 1, there's a throne that Ezekiel sees in his vision. A throne surrounded by glowing light. There are four living creatures, the same ones.

A lion, an ox, a human, and an eagle. There's wheels within wheels that are full of eyes. There's a crystal sea, a firmament surrounding the throne. And there's a sound of rushing waters.

[11 : 12] When John is doing what any good Jewish writer would do, he's using the Ezekiel vision as a template to communicate something old and something new. When his readers heard four living creatures, they didn't think, oh, that's weird.

They thought, oh, like Ezekiel, this is a throne room vision. Very sort of common prophetic apocalyptic way of talking about being in the presence of God.

If somebody makes a movie reference today, if you say, I'll be back in a certain accent, you know I'm referencing Terminator. When someone says, may the force be with you, you get what they're talking about.

And John is essentially saying, remember that wild throne room vision Ezekiel had? The moment when God's glory showed up in the midst of exile? Yeah, I'm seeing something just like it.

But now, in this vision, which we'll see, Jesus is in it too. So what does John see? First of all, he sees a throne. And the throne is referenced 17 times.

[12 : 12] If there's a significance to the number 17, I don't know what it is. It's just referenced a lot. And someone is sitting on it. And John doesn't directly describe them as a person.

Rather, it's jasper and carnelian, rainbow like an emerald, precious stones, this sort of scattering of light, colors that shouldn't exist together, all somehow existing together.

Throne appears 17 times in just these two chapters, chapters 4 and 5. That's not an accident. And everything in this vision revolves around the throne. And the throne is not at the back of the room.

It's at the center of the room. And everything else happens around it. And around the throne are the 24 other thrones with 24 elders, likely representing 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles, this united people of God, dressed in white with golden crowns.

From the throne, you see the lightning and the thunder and the seven torches, a sea of glass like crystal. And then you see the four living creatures, which I think we have an image of.

[13 : 16] And this is like the least weird one that I could find online. But you have the lion, the ox, the human, the eagle. They have six wings. These are cherubim in Ezekiel's language.

You might know the word cherub, which usually you think of like the chubby cheek angels, right? The precious moment sort of style. But the cherub are originally the angels that sort of were molded to have their wings covering the Ark of the Covenant.

The Ark of the Covenant is the locus, the center of the presence of God in the tabernacle and eventually the temple in the ancient Israelite religion. And so those sculptured angels, then Ezekiel has a vision of them and they have six wings and all of these eyes all over their body.

They represent, depending on how you cut it up, different aspects of creation. So the lion being the untamed wild animals, the wildest and fiercest and strongest of them.

The ox being the strongest of the tamed, domesticated animals. The bird being the fastest and also, you know, representing all the flying animals. And human beings being the most intelligent, the wisest of all the animals.

[14 : 31] They have six wings, eyes that are all around and inside, which how John saw that, I don't know, but it's a lot. And day and night without ceasing, they sing, holy, holy, holy, that thrice holy call, the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and is and is to come.

Now, I want to say something about worship here. In this sermon, ultimately, we will be about worship. But what we see is that worship is not about getting God's attention.

And when I lead worship behind the piano, I often start the service like this by saying, we gather into this place. God is already present. We don't have to do anything to get God to show up or come here.

We don't have to do anything to get God's attention on us. We don't have to, like, you know, flap our arms or dance a special dance or say a special prayer. God is already here. Rather, worship is about spending our attention on God.

It's not about getting God's attention. That's settled. It's about spending our attention on God. And we all know, particularly in this world that we live in, that what we spend our attention on is one of the most precious things in our economy.

[15 : 46] Because everything in our economy is about trying to get our attention. And worship is an act of rebellion against this economy. To say, I'm not going to spend my attention on all of the things you want me to spend my money on and spend my time on.

I'm going to spend my attention on God. The living creatures aren't trying to wake God up. They're not performing to earn God's favor. They're not doing it even out of a sense of feeling particularly worshipful in that emotional sense.

They're simply directing their attention continuously and without ceasing toward the one on the throne. And whenever they do this, whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks, then the 24 elders, again, that representation of the people of God, they fall before the throne and they cast their crowns down and sing, you are worthy, Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power.

You created all things and by your will, they existed and were created. So creation worships first and then humanity, the people of God worship next.

It's a call and response, a liturgy, creation, the stars, as the psalm says, are singing your praises and then out of that call, humanity responds, the people of God respond, one act of worship triggering another act of worship.

[17 : 08] So that's chapter four in summary. It's the foundation, the baseline, the before. And then we get into chapter five. Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?

So as John gets into chapter five, the next part of the vision, in the right hand, he sees the one seated on the throne, holding a scroll, written on both sides, which was unusual.

And it's sealed with these seven seals and a mighty angel proclaims with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? And there's silence. No one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or even to look into it.

And John begins to weep bitterly. Not a quiet, dignified crying, but a gut-wrenching weeping. Because if no one can open the scroll, if history remains sealed, if God's purposes remain locked, then what hope is there?

And that's the crisis at the center of this vision, the problem that has to be solved. But the angel says, don't weep. Look, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David is conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

[18 : 22] Again, more biblical references, more allusions that John is making that his audience would have understand. The lion of the tribe of Judah, the way of talking about the ruler of the tribe of Judah, which was David and David's line, which ruled over all of the United Kingdom of Israel and Judah.

The root of David, the thing that bore David up into the throne and will continue after David. These are all messianic languages. The savior, the redeemer, look and see the lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered so he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

If you're a first century Jewish Christian, you know exactly what this means. This is messianic language, a promised king, the conquering warrior, the one who's going to throw off oppression and establish God's kingdom through power.

It's Genesis language and Samuel language and Kings and Chronicles and Isaiah and Jeremiah language. It's the Messiah you've been looking for. So John looks to the lion and sees instead a lamb.

It's kind of like a dream. You ever have those dreams you try to describe to people, which as we've talked about before, don't do that. But when you do, you talk about those dreams and it's like, well, it's kind of like we were, it's back like we were back in Iowa, but it was my parents' house in Indiana at the same time.

[19 : 39] And I was talking to my mom, but my mom was also my high school principal. Like that sort of simultaneity that can happen in dreams. That's what's happening to John. I look to the lion and I see a lamb.

And not just a lamb, but a lamb standing, looking as if it had been slaughtered. And you can thank me for not putting that image up on the screen. And the lion that they just announced appears as a lamb.

And this is the central image of the book of Revelation. It's why it's the art for our series. It's the main way to make sure that you are staying on track with what Revelation is about.

It's the controlling metaphor, the hinge, the key. Because if you miss the lamb that looks as if it has been slain, then you're going to miss it all. Any reading of Revelation that reduces God's final act to a violent, vindictive, vengeful conclusion completely and utterly misses the point.

The lion and all that warrior king imagery is reinterpreted through the lamb. Victory is not going to come by violence. It's going to come through sacrifice.

[20 : 49] It's going to come through vulnerability. It's going to come through love that goes to the cross. If you read some of the speculators' understandings of Revelation, they want, they think that Jesus is going to come back like Rambo.

That Jesus was meek and mild and blessed are the poor and all of that. Well, that was first coming Jesus. But second coming Jesus, well, he's pissed. Go ahead and play the clip. Next week on U62, he's back.

And this time, he's mad. Gandhi 2. No more Mr. Passive Resistance. He's out to kick some butt.

This is one bad mother you don't want to mess with. Don't move, slang boy.

He's a one-man wrecking crew. But he also knows how to party. Give me a stick.

[22 : 02] Medium rare. Hey, Caldy! There is only one law. His law. Gandhi 2.

This is how some people want Jesus to be like. Jesus is going to come back, have a second coming, and it's going to be a slaughterhouse. All of those enemies and bad guys, well, they're all going to burst.

And if you've ever read the last book in the Left Behind series, it's not all that different from this, where Jesus shows up in the clouds, and there's an army gathered in the Valley of Megiddo or Armageddon, and people are literally just exploding their guts out because Jesus has returned.

They turn Jesus into Christ too, no more Mr. Nice Messiah. But the book itself resists that reading at every turn.

The lion is the lamb. The way of conquering is the way of sacrificial love. The lamb has seven horns and seven eyes, which John tells us are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

[23 : 08] The horns equal power. The seven horns equal complete power. Eyes equal knowledge. Seven eyes equals complete knowledge. And the slaughtered lamb has full power and full knowledge.

And the marks of death don't diminish the authority of the lamb. They are the source of authority. So the lamb goes and takes the scroll from the right hand of the one seated on the throne.

He doesn't ask permission. He doesn't wait to be given it. He takes it because he has earned the right, because his wounds have qualified him. And when the lamb takes the scroll, worship explodes in the throne room.

First, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fall before the lamb now, not the throne, but the lamb, and they start to sing a new song. You are worthy to take the scroll and to break its seals.

You were slaughtered, and by your blood you ransomed for God, saints from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them a kingdom of priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.

[24 : 08] Compare and contrast this to chapter four song. Chapter four says, You are worthy, person, thing on the throne, for you created all things. In chapter five, you are worthy for you were slain.

Creation and redemption. Both are the grounds for worship. And notice that the lamb receives the same worship as the one on the throne, singing the same song, using the same language.

Chapter four, you are worthy, for you created all things. Chapter five, you are worthy for you were slaughtered. And then the circle expands. Myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands of angels join in.

Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. And then the circle expands again. Now it's every creature in heaven and earth and under the earth and in the sea.

Everything and all of creation singing to the one seated on the throne and to the lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever. And the four living creatures say amen.

[25 : 14] So be it. Let it be. And the elders fall down and worship. And that's the climax of these two chapters. Universal worship. All creation. No exceptions.

Acknowledging that the throne stands secure and the lamb who is slain is worthy. Now last week, I talked about how we need to move from cynicism to hope and wonder.

And some of you were nodding along. And some of you were thinking, yeah, but how? How do I do that? When I've been hurt by the church, when worship has been weaponized against me, when I've used it, I've seen it being used to manipulate and to control and to exclude.

How do we, as progressive Christians or ex-evangelicals or whatever you want to label yourselves, how do we worship God in a way that doesn't reopen our wounds but rather promotes healing?

That's a real honest question that should not be minimized. Because for many of us, worship became about performance. I'll speak for myself. Became about conformity, proving that you were spiritual enough.

[26 : 23] You're a one-hand worshiper, a two-hand worshiper. Your hands here are here. If you're a worship leader, it was about getting people emotionally worked up and lathered up so they could make a decision that maybe they second-guess later, but that's fine.

You'll just repeat next week. And let's make you clear, that's not worship. Worship does not equal, should not equal, should never equal emotional manipulation.

But the other trap is then just reducing worship to sort of going through the motions. Just go through the motions, do that, and then we can get to the actual important stuff, which usually means justice work community action.

And listen, we're all about justice, and we'll get there in a minute. But if we skip over worship, I think we miss something crucial. Because what I think gets missed, particularly in circles like ours, is that from a biblical standpoint, from a Christian historical standpoint, worship always served as the foundation for justice.

It's the foundation, the roots, the dirt of justice. You can't have a tree without roots. And you can do justice work without worship. People of all faiths and no faith do lots of really good justice work.

[27 : 41] But from a Christian perspective, worship is where we're rooted and where we're grounded. James 1, 27 says, Yes, absolutely.

Isaiah 58 says, Yes, God cares deeply about justice.

But where do those imperatives come from? If you go to the beginning of the book of James, if you read through the entirety of the book of Isaiah, it comes from knowing who God is, and what God is like, and what God values.

And when you spend time in the throne room, when you direct and spend your attention towards God, what do you see? You see a God who created everything and calls it good.

You see a God who doesn't hoard power, but shares it. Because notice the throne room has more than one throne. You see a God whose final word isn't violence, but sacrifice.

[28 : 50] You see a lamb with wounds who stands victorious. Therefore, worship will shape our moral imagination. And this, of course, works both ways.

Worship is formational. If you worship a God who hoards power, if you worship a God who is violent, if you worship a God who only wants people who are just like you, well, that's going to shape your imagination in that direction.

But if you worship a God who shares power, or who calls creation good, whose final word isn't violence, but sacrifice, that will form us and teach us, not just intellectually, but worship is in our bodies.

It's what we do with our limbs and our vocal cords. When we sing together and we pray together, when we share communion together, we're not just checking a box. We're being formed and shaped and reminded.

Corporate worship is a form of embodied theology. When we sing together, our heart rates synchronize with the beats.

[29 : 54] Our breathing patterns begin to align. And that's not woo-woo mysticism. It's neuroscience. It's physiology. Our bodies literally become symbiotic, even if just for those few moments.

Think about meditation. Meditation. Study after study shows that meditation makes us more attentive and compassionate and aware and productive and creative. Because it's a practice of focused attention, of being present, of training your mind.

Worship, corporate worship, Sunday morning, Sunday evening worship, is like collective meditation on the character of God. It's training together our bodies to pay attention to what matters, to be formed by what's true.

When we sing about God's faithfulness, we're reminding each other we can be faithful to one another. When we confess our sins together, we're reminding each other you're not alone in your struggles.

When we share communion, we're reminding each other there's a table that's big enough for all of us. It's not about getting God's attention. God always has and always will see us.

[31 : 03] It's about spending our attention on God regularly and communally and embodiedly so that we remember who we are and whose we are.

So what does worship look like for us at the table? I think it means worship that's honest about our wounds, not pretending that they don't exist. It's open to mystery without asking for or demanding emotional manipulation.

It's grounded in God's character as revealed in Jesus. It's inclusive of questions and doubt. It's connected to justice, not separate from it. It's embodied.

It uses our voices, our bodies, our gathered presence. It's communal. We're not performing for God. We're directing our attention together. It's what I said last week, the letter to the table church.

Remember, it's possible to be both critically thinking and spiritually surrendered. You can question everything and still fall on your knees. You can deconstruct harmful theology while still being constructed by divine love.

[32 : 09] And that's what we're trying to do here. And the thing that we can never forget is that controlling metaphor of revelation. The image everything else must be interpreted through is the lamb that was slain.

Not the lamb who conquers through violence, not the warrior who establishes peace through force, the lamb who was slaughtered. The way of victory is the way of sacrificial love.

And this completely redefines power itself. Because in God's kingdom, the last are first. The meek inherit the earth. The one who serves is the one who is greatest.

And victory comes through a cross. And that means our worship, our justice work, our community life, everything that we do as a church has to be filtered through this lens. Later in Revelation, John writes, and they overcome, they conquer, they are victorious by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony.

Overcoming is by faith, not by violence. Victory is through sacrifice, not through force. And the way is the lamb's way, not Babylon's way. So remember the open door.

[33 : 18] Jesus knocks, the door opens, John sees the throne room. And the sort of meditative question I have for us is, what do you see when you look through that door?

If heaven were to open up, if Jesus were to knock and you were to open and you were to see reality as it truly is, what would you see? I think the Spirit is inviting us to see a throne room that's secure even when the world feels chaotic.

continuous worship of creation and humanity that's continuous even when I can't find the words. The Lion of Judah was actually a lamb.

Wounds that qualify rather than disqualify. A universal worship that includes every tribe and language and people and nation and tongue.

One that does not homogenize but unites. And the Spirit's invitation is still there for us. Come up here. Not to escape the world, but to see the world from heaven's perspective.

[34 : 32] To remember what's true even when everything else feels uncertain. To spend our attention on God so that we can see clearly what justice looks like on earth.

The four living creatures sing day and night holy, holy, holy the Lord God the Almighty who was and is and is to come. We never start worship at 1030 or 1035 or 1040 or whatever you walk in.

You don't start worshiping. We join it. A program already in progress. Worship is already happening. Has always been happening.

Will always be happening around the throne. And so the question is will we add our voices? Will we risk being beginners in prayer again?

Will we allow our hearts to feel tender towards mystery? Will we dare to direct our attention toward God not to get God's attention but to be formed by God's character?

[35 : 32] Because here's what's promised to those who are victorious. Which means those who remain faithful to the way of the Lamb. living water that never disappoints. Not manipulation.

Not emotional highs that fade by Tuesday. Not performance anxiety. But life. Real life. Abundant life. The kind that wells up and overflows into justice and compassion and hope.

The door is open. The throne stands secure. The Lamb who is slain is worthy and worship. True worship is the dissident act of spending our attention on God so that we can see clearly what love looks like on earth.

Let us worship. Amen.