

Revelation 7 and The Proactive Table Church

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, good evening. So last week we concluded our sermon series on the first half of the book of Acts that we were calling Called Together. It was about just that, what it means to be called together as the church of Jesus Christ. And next week we're going to start a new series called A More Beautiful Gospel, in which we are going to try to think through, through the rest of the summer, what it means to locate ourselves as a church in the history and doctrine of Christianity. Where are we? Where do we place ourselves? What kind of theology do we embrace?

This history is so diverse. Where are we sitting? Where are you sitting? But today, Pastor Anthony and I thought it might make a little bit of sense to try to step back, to take a little bit of space in between these two series, to just say a few simple things about who we are as a community and what grounds us. So much has been going on in the world that, and I'll use this word for myself, feels catastrophic. So much in the news is coming at us that feels like it could take us over the edge, emotionally and otherwise. For many of us, Dr. King's comparison of America to a burning house may seem more apt than ever.

And too often when we consider our reality, it feels like we are faced with this choice between either remaining in a continuously reactive state that leaves us psychologically and spiritually threadbare, or the other side of that we are tempted to kind of hang up our hope and just go to sleep.

Sometimes actually just go to sleep. But today what the two of us want to do is to share the stage in an attempt to talk about another option, which is the option to acknowledge the upheaval of the present moment while also saying what it is, that who it is that we are and what it is that we're about beyond just this present moment.

We want to be clear about the future of this community and what we're moving toward, even as we take seriously the gravity of our national landscape.

[2 : 5 3] So what scripture, what part of scripture do you turn to in the midst of what feels like apocalypse? I thought somebody was going to yell it out. Revelation!

Let's go to, we're going to go today to the book of Revelation, to Revelation 7 specifically. I'm going to give some framing from that section of scripture and then pass it over to Pastor Anthony.

So if you have a Bible, a device, whatever you do, do it now. Revelation 7 is what we're looking at. It reads, after this, I saw four angels standing in the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds and the earth so that no wind could blow on earth or sea or against any tree.

I saw another angel ascending from the rising sun with the seal of the living God. And he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage earth and sea saying, do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads.

And I heard the number of those who were sealed, 144,000, sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel. From the tribe of Judah, 12,000 sealed. From the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 sealed. From the tribe of Gad, 12,000 sealed. And jumping down a bit to the end of that, at the very end, from the tribe of Zebulun, from the tribe of Joseph, and from the tribe of Benjamin.

[4 : 46] After this, I looked and there was a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, from all the tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the lamb, robed in white with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice saying, Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the lamb.

And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God singing, Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.

Then one of the elders addressed me saying, Who are these robed in white and where have they come from? I said to him, Sir, you are the one who knows. Then he said to me, These are they who have come out of the great ordeal.

They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God and worship him day and night within his temple.

And the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more and thirst no more and the sun will not strike them nor any scorching heat. For the lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd and he will guide them to the springs of the water of life.

[6 : 26] And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Okay, I know that was a lot. I know that was a lot. So we can probably all admit that Revelation, even this chapter of Revelation, seems a bit odd.

Often when we're left reading, when we read this book, it just all seems a jumble of strangeness. In this passage alone, you get angels and elders and seals and robes and you get all this numeric repetition.

We're placed squarely inside a non-literal visionary experience that is very much in keeping with this genre of apocalypse. The book of Revelation overall is a pastoral letter.

It's a letter written to encourage the churches in what is, seven churches in what is modern-day Turkey. It is written by this person called John.

But it's a pastoral letter that is mainly written in the style of apocalypse. This kind of writing was a way, a genre of expressing that was pretty ordinary among Jews and Christians of the time.

[7 : 40] It seems odd to us, but it might have been similar to, think about satirical cartoons or political cartoons, maybe speculative fiction, Afrofuturist writing, where you get all these symbols.

But they're symbols that have a strong reference point in our culture and remind us of something, that probes something within us. The other thing to know about apocalyptic writing is that its intent was to uncover something that was concealed.

It was meant to reveal something. The word itself is tied to the idea of unveiling. So whenever we encounter this genre of writing, the invitation is to pause and to ask ourselves what the author was trying to unveil to the first people who encountered the writing.

It's usually something historical from the time or something political. And then we ask what's being unveiled to us, what's being revealed to us. And because we find ourselves in now what feels like this almost apocalyptic moment, we can consider a scripture like this one and ask in our present moment what's being unveiled for us now within our own history.

What vision should ground us and what action are we called to take? Somewhere between reactivity, this is the invitation, and that temptation to just go to sleep.

[9 : 24] It's about knowing what time it is, which is always, always the call of prophets. Knowing what time it is and then living with intention within that given time.

Knowing what time it is, which is always the same. So in this passage we get an interlude. It comes after you get advice to the seven churches. It comes toward the beginning of John's vision. It's about hope for God's anticipated future.

It describes a stillness. The wind is held back. The stillness is for the purpose of an angel coming and sealing with a signet ring these people, which is about protection of the marginalized, these people who are under threat.

They are claimed as God's own. It's also another way of talking about baptism, which I find fascinating. Because this protection comes by identifying with the way of a crucified savior rather than a conquering imperial king.

And John hears about the details of this group. And they number 144,000 and they come from the faithful remnant of Israel. John hears about this limited group.

[10 : 38] But then he sees something different. He sees a crowd of people that is beyond counting that crosses every boundary of identity imaginable.

They chant about God's salvation holding palms in their hands just as the peasant crowd shouted acclamation to Jesus as he entered Jerusalem on a donkey. Then in the vision, other heavenly beings echo the act of worship.

And then finally, one of the elders in the vision asked John to explain. And John is like, you know what this is about.

And he basically says that these are those who have suffered greatly, who have died for what they believed and remained faithful. And their promised shelter and shepherding in this Eden-like state.

Now, there is clearly a lot I can say about this passage, but I am not preaching by myself, so I've got to keep it short. So, here is what I will say. There's one thing here that I want to focus on, and then I'm going to pass it over to Pastor Anthony.

[11 : 45] What blows my mind about this passage and what feels especially relevant as we go into this July 4th weekend with so much swirling around us is this sense that John did a double take.

That John looked, and then John looked again. He has this first this sense of a crowd that he can count. A crowd from the people of Israel, a very large crowd for sure, but one that is limited, that contains this number that you could technically count.

Now, that's a large crowd of 141,000 for Jewish, you know, Jewish Christians would have been crazy large. Because these were people who worshipped in really small churches, so it would have been a hopeful vision.

And it would have also been a hopeful vision because Israel was over and over oppressed, and this group of people seems to have found salvation in some kind of final form. But then John senses something else.

He looks again, and he sees that crowd beyond accounting, a crowd that is faithful to this way, and a crowd that is inclusive across boundaries of language and ethnicity and nation.

[13 : 00] I love this because John, like us, is guided by an imagination that says that only my people can ultimately know and be known in the most intimate way by God.

But then that imagination is thrown apart by a vision which centers the every and the all. Not only my people, not only our people, but people representing the wild diversity of God's creative will.

All these people will be known and know God in the most intimate way. So as we move through this July 4th weekend, we are again confronted with how our nationalism squares with this kind of scandalous universality of the reign of God.

We are invited to consider what it means to be a Christian. To betray or to do what feels at least like betraying my people for that every and that all.

Now this is not about erasure. It's not about eradication of difference or identity. The whole context of the book is about justice, okay, from systems of domination.

[14 : 22] But there is something here that reminds us that the dream of my people surviving, of being victorious, is not the kingdom of God.

And that whatever nationalist gospel we find ourselves inside of is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. John lets go of this first imagination which has rooted him and turns toward a much bigger vision and a much more scandalous vision than we are often comfortable with.

The whole of the book of Revelation is in part about resisting our limited imaginations. The ones that we have received so often and stepping into something that is bigger.

A vision that requires our non-conforming systems of domination. A vision that is rooted not simply in reactivity to the events of the day but also which resents the temptation to go to sleep.

A vision that is grounded in the shepherd who is a lamb. So how do we think about this vision here at the table church given our present moment?

[15 : 40] What is the future we are going toward? What is it that we stand for both in the midst of all that is going on and beyond the present moment?

Pastor Anthony is going to come up and share a bit about that now. One of the first conversations I ever had when I became your pastor a couple years ago.

I was sitting down with someone. Hello Josh if you are watching. And we were talking about what makes the table the table. And many of you, many of the folks who come to the table, they come to the table as a place of perhaps their last stop on their way out of belief.

Or at least on their way out of Christianity. And the table is this beautiful place of hope. That maybe things don't have to be the way we've heard about or the way that we've experienced.

Churches don't have to be places of nationalism and bigotry. Churches could be places of hope and redemption and togetherness. But as I was talking to this person, he said, You know, I feel like the table church is really good at knowing what we're not.

[16 : 49] We're not like those other places. We're not like those other Christians. But we're not as good at knowing what we're for. And I can say that over the past couple of years of being part of this community and helping lead this community, that there can be a challenge in us being only ever reactive.

Because there's been so much to react to. Constant barrage of bad news. And so we have to pivot and turn this way and that.

But the reason we start with Revelation 7 and where I want to take us with our time is how do we be proactive? How do we declare with some boldness and some humility, This is what I think we're for.

This is what I think that we need to move forward with. How do we own our specific particular part of God's mission for the world as revealed in Revelation 7?

How do we own our particular part of what it means for there to be an uncountable multitude of every tribe, tongue, nation, and tongue, singing victory belongs to our God?

[18 : 09] Now every faith system, Christian or not, spiritual or not, every faith system offers you three things, at least three things. The first is a belief and a story, a narrative to make sense of the world.

Christians, they have creeds, we have scripture, we have these stories that we tell about a cross and resurrection, and they help us make sense of the world. A faith tradition also offers you a community of like-minded people to go on a journey with.

And so in Christianity, we have churches, we have these gatherings of people who vaguely hold to these stories and metanarratives, find them helpful in some way, and we journey together in an attempt to grow in the image of the God that we follow.

And churches, faith systems of any sort, also offer you a set of practices. Things, tangible, physical things that you do with your body and with your soul that is with you, that you and your community do together to connect to these stories and beliefs.

So every faith community has these. The Table Church has these. And I think we can kind of drill down on what is our particular specific expression of these three things.

[19 : 32] Our beliefs and our stories, our community and our practices. So that's what I want to talk about with our remaining time. So let's talk about beliefs and stories. The first thing that the Table Church, I want to say that we are for, not just reacting to, but being proactive against, is that we are unapologetically centered on the way of Jesus.

We're a church, and we're a Christian church, and we're not sorry about that. Now, there's lots of things that we could be sorry about, the ways that that's been expressed over decades, centuries, and millennia.

But when we turn our attention to Jesus himself, Jesus who reveals God, that is what we want to be unapologetically following.

Brian Zahn, the pastor and author, puts it like this, God is like Jesus, and God has always been like Jesus. There has never been a time when God was not like Jesus.

We have not always known what God is like, but now we do. And so as a church, as a faith community gathering together, our faith and our story is centered in on God as revealed in Jesus, about this God who is others-oriented, self-sacrificing, obedient to the point of death on a cross for the sake of our life.

[20 : 56] That is what we want to be unapologetically for. That we want to follow in the way of a God who would suffer for God's creation.

In more specific terms, and this is what we're going to talk about over the next eight weeks in our belief series, is we're Trinitarian. We believe in God and Christ and the Holy Spirit.

We believe in the great tradition of the church, that where there has been agreements on what it is to be a Christian, we agree on that. We want to be recognizably Christian.

That there is some evidence that when folks look at us, we're not part of just a sociological term, but people can look at us and say, oh, these people seem to know and do something about the way of Jesus.

The other thing I want to say about our beliefs and the stories that we tell is that we want to continue to lean into our clarity and our ambiguity. This is something that we've been journeying together a lot with as a church over the past couple of years.

[22 : 01] Clarity is important. That we don't have to stay ambiguous about everything and not give clear answers because we're afraid that we might rock the boat too much.

Or that we have a misguided desire that everybody should get along. And we, I think, have been growing as a church, as a community to say, actually there's some people that we don't get along with.

People who will deny the dignity and personhood of folks who have been historically marginalized. LGBTQ folks, black folks, indigenous folks, so many folks who have been hurt by the church, by our nation, by systems of oppression.

We don't have to pretend that, you know, well, maybe we should be buddy-buddy with systems like that. No, we can be clear on what we are for. We can be clear around the central tenets of God's character, that God is a God of love, who breaks systems of oppression, who stands against them, and who creates communities of people to break those systems of oppression.

We can be clear about that kind of God. But there's also ambiguity. When you start using language for God, when you start talking about metaphysics and all those big questions, what happens after you die, if there are people who are trying to give you specific, detailed answers and pretending like there's no room for discussion, well, then there's something wrong with that as well.

[23 : 37] So we need to grow in our clarity and our ambiguity. Tonetta and I often talk about the metaphor of a symphony versus jazz.

Symphonies, you know, they're beautiful. I appreciate a good symphony, but they're incredibly structured. There's no room for improvisation. There are the notes on the page and you play the notes on the page and that is it.

And I think what it is to follow the way of Jesus is a bit more like jazz, where jazz isn't no rules whatsoever. No, you still have music theory and what's a scale and what's a chord.

But then there's room to play and to dance within those rules to make a sort of music that's new and beautiful. And when you're talking about theology and beliefs and all of that, there are things that we want to be clear about.

There is chords and scales that we're going to stick to when it comes to people's dignity and personhood. But when it comes into how we move in the world to make it a more beautiful and just place, yeah, there's going to be some improvisation.

[24 : 43] And every once in a while, maybe some discord. But when that discord resolves, there's beauty. So a faith community, the Table Church, we have beliefs.

And we're going to lean in to following the way of Jesus and getting more clear on what we are for. We also are a community, a community of like-minded journeyers, sojourners together.

And the first big thing that I think is important for the Table as we grow as this community is that we're going to be a fellowship of difference.

A fellowship of difference. This is a phrase coined by New Testament scholar, Scott McKnight. McKnight writes this. He says, The church is God's world-changing social experiment of bringing unlikes and difference to the table to share life with one another as a new kind of family.

And when this happens, we show the world what love, justice, peace, reconciliation, and life together are designed by God to be. The church is God's show and tell for the world to see how God wants us to live as a family.

[25 : 57] So the Table church wants to grow. I think we want to grow. I think we've shown a journey, a path in growing, and our ability to be a fellowship of difference.

That means that we're growing in our ability to be a multicultural, multiracial, multi-ethnic church. We're growing in our ability to continue to put the folks who have not been historically centered in positions of authority and power.

And so that means women, and that means queer folks, and that means black folks. That means that we're growing in our ability to intentionally create a space where you could walk in and feel like, hmm, my people are here.

It's what Paul Nixon, Paul Nixon is a writer, he's worked in churches, he's actually our consultant with the Table church and the Resurrection City's merger together.

It's what Paul Nixon calls a church of multis. And there are lots of different kinds of multis. You can be multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-gender, multi-sexual, multi-economic, multi-lots and lots of different things.

[27 : 05] And the Table church, I think, is going to once to lean into that, but we also have an open question because we can't do all the multis at once and do it well. The Table church is growing in its ability to be multi-ethnic.

It's growing in its ability to share leadership with people of different races and genders and sexualities. But to be honest, from what we've observed, we're not the best at being multi in terms of education or economic power.

By very virtue of being in D.C., that says something about the sorts of people that we tend to reach out to. Historically, the Table has reached out to folks who identify as transient in some way.

The Washington, D.C. is maybe a step along in their journey. But what would it look like for us to grow as a church for those who D.C. has been their home for a generation or more, for those who have no intention on moving on?

What would that look like? But that's an open question of, we can't do it all at once and do it well. So what multis will we choose? A fellowship of difference, but what kind of difference?

[28 : 18] I think the value is there that we want to be that multi sort of church, but we still have a ways to go. I think the other thing that's important to recognize about being a fellowship of difference is I think if we want to follow the way of Jesus, that means that we need to have a preference towards those who have been marginalized.

A fellowship of difference is easier said than done. Research is actually pretty clear that interracial churches often, most of the time, get dominated by white values and aesthetics.

Research is clear that two-thirds of the church attendance is female, and that's pretty true of the table as well. But throughout the country, 80% of clergy are male.

So there's this funny thing that happens where churches try to be multi in some way, but then the same people who usually get centered stay centered.

If we want to seek justice for our communities of faith in our neighborhoods, that means we actually have to be intentional, on purpose, about correcting for injustices that have been in place.

[29 : 29] My favorite example and quote of what this could look like is a Ruth Bader Ginsburg story. You've probably heard it. When she was asked about how many of the nine judges of the Supreme Court should be female, she offered the answer, anybody know?

Nine. Why, the journalist asked? Well, nine men was a satisfactory number for the first 200 years. Why not the next? In Revelation 7, we get a count of the number of people from each tribe of Israel, all 12 tribes, each with 12,000 people sealed.

Each tribe has the same number. And even though some tribes were historically larger, bigger, more powerful, some were smaller and less powerful, some were utterly destroyed by Assyria, every tribe gets the same number of seals.

Jesus tells a story about a group of day laborers who started work. And they each start work at different times in the day. And they each get paid the same. It sounds unjust, but it's actually a form of justice, a vision of God's justice.

What does it mean that for 2,000 years, where most pastors and priests and clergy haven't been women, haven't been gay or trans or queer, where in America, the loudest voice of Christianity has usually been rich and suburban and white?

- [30 : 54] What does God's sort of justice look like when the nine justices have all been men and the clergy have all been straight and white? In order to build a true fellowship of difference that follows the way of Jesus, we'll need to follow Jesus' words, the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.

Or Jesus' mother, who he may have learned a thing or two from. Mary writes, he has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed. What Paul writes to the Philippians, instead of each person watching out for their own good, watch out for what is better for others.

So what implications does that have for those of us who are white in a racialized society? What implications does that have for men in a patriarchal society, for non-disabled in an ableist society, for straight or cis or hetero in a heterosynonormative society, for rich in a capitalist society, for married in a single-isn't-good-enough society, for adults in a kids-as-an-afterthought society?

What implications does that have for us as a church, for a city, for our neighborhoods, for those who have been in power, who get their pictures on magazines and book covers, and who get positions like mine?

- [32 : 25] What does it mean for a church to say, no, the way of Jesus says, flip it. And just so you know, this sort of vision for church, a multi-ethnic, multi-racial church that is looking to overturn the usual narratives of power, it's not a recipe for growth and success.

In church planting, if you go to church planting school, the school to go start churches, there's this principle that you get taught called the homogenous unit principle. And it means people convert to Christianity at a higher rate, and therefore churches experience more numerical growth when they don't have to cross socioeconomic, racial, or cultural lines.

And so church planting organizations, the businesses that go start churches, they actually would tell church planters, go plant churches, they'll go all look like you.

Don't cross those lines, you'll be more successful. And it was. That was the beginning of the church growth movement and the explosion of megachurches. But what I think the table is advocating for, what at least I and Tnetta are advocating for, and our leadership is advocating for, is something harder and riskier and slower, and I argue looks more like Revelation 7.

So we've got our beliefs and our stories unapologetically focused on the way of Jesus, a fellowship of difference, and we want to cultivate practices of growth.

- [34 : 07] My favorite definition of spiritual disciplines and practices is from Dallas Willard. He says, disciplines are activities that are within our power that enable us to accomplish what we can't do by direct effort.

It's things that we can do that are within our power that enable us to do things that we couldn't do otherwise. For example, I am not naturally a good writer or speaker.

I'm shy. I like staying home most of the time. But I have a discipline of reading, of listening to other preachers, and somehow now I've made a career of it. I'm like not naturally a friendly person.

As a teenager, when I decided that I wanted to be a pastor, both my pastor at the time and my own mother said to me, isn't pastoring like a person-people job?

And aren't you like not a person-people person? Thanks, Mom. But the discipline of friendship, of showing up in communal spaces, of meeting around a dinner table, has led me to being, you know, I think an okay pastor and a little bit friendlier than I used to be.

[35 : 20] We cannot, by direct effort, make our neighborhoods more just. We cannot, by direct effort, become patient, fervent revolutionaries that pass the flame of hope and justice from generation to generation.

We cannot, by direct effort, become a more diverse church just by sheerly thinking we can. But we can take on the disciplines that will make us into the sorts of people who will.

So you have your classic disciplines of scripture reading and prayer and meditation, feasting and fasting, of solitude and silence and friendship and service. You have our communal practices, the things that we do together, like worship and lament, of covenant, of making promises to each other and keeping those promises, of faithful presence, of being a church that when it moves into the neighborhood, it's committed to its people and it sticks there, of justice and reckoning and reparation.

We can take on those practices not because they're sexy or cool, because they make us into the kinds of people and the type of community and the type of fellowship of difference that moves into a world that looks more and more like a place where God could call it home.

It means that we actively work against unjust systems. It requires advocacy and policy change and even the idea of politics.

[36 : 51] And they say you shouldn't mix religion and politics, and I understand where that comes from, but if we desire to see a world that looks more just, yes, of course it means you individually being involved with your neighbors and with the people that you cross on the streets, but it also means that we organize ourselves for social change, for not so that we can put ourselves in power, but rather so that we can organize power for the sake of love.

This is how Dr. Martin Luther King puts it. He says, Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic.

Power is at its best, is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice as its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

So as a church and as individuals and as a community, we owe it to ourselves and to our world to develop disciplines that shape us into the kinds of people who push back against everything that stands against love.

A fellowship of difference dedicated to the way of Jesus, putting love into practice in public, it's going to have to reckon with power, and we will need to have our own practices that tap into God's power to implement the demands of justice, to correct everything that stands against love, both within ourselves and within our cities and our societies.

[38 : 25] We can't do it alone. We can't do it without a dedication to the practices that empower us. So to summarize all of this, it's to live as if Jesus were king today.

Revelation 7 has this hymn, Victory Belongs to Our God Who Sits on the Throne and to the Lamb. It tells the story of people who have come out of great hardship, and it tells the story of a God who will lead this people to springs of water, of life, and wiping every tear from every eye.

This isn't merely a description of a future day. This is our mission cry for now, for this moment. For this day. So the table, I believe we need to become more and more clear about what we're for, not merely what we're against.

That we become more and more centered on the way of Jesus, about creating a community of difference, about establishing practices that will sustain us for the long haul.

Tanada. So as we close, and as I was thinking about how to close out this sermon, talking about vision and where we are, oddly enough, I'm not a big Facebook person, but a post that I saw on Facebook came to mind.

[39 : 56] It was by a pastor who's a friend named Josh Scott, and his post was on gun violence. And it was essentially about, his essential argument was that Christianity came from a non-violent movement.

It wasn't actually this post that turned my head. It was the comments. I love the comments, y'all. I'm one of those people. You know, I like the comments in a provocative post. I want to know what people say.

And as you can guess, there are people who agree with him, people who disagree with him, people who nuanced what he was saying. But there was this one comment that really stuck in my heart. And as we were thinking about vision and where we are as a church, I don't know, it just kept coming back to me.

And the comment read, it is well and good to embrace contemporary issues, but I'm starting to miss Jesus. And of course, the pastor responded like, you know, these things go together, right?

You've talked about contemporary issues in light of Jesus and Jesus of, you know, and what does Jesus have to say to contemporary issues? And I agree that these are things that can't be separated.

[41 : 08] And yet, as we talk about vision and as we, you know, have been becoming for a while now a church that is unapologetic in the way it thinks about what is happening in this present moment, determined not to react, but to respond with thoughtful discernment, I realize that this is a sentiment that can come up.

So I'll just close by saying this, that any vision that we hold as a church which does not give into reactivity and does not encourage us to go to sleep, any vision like that must be grounded in worship.

And that's what Revelation 7 is all about. It is worship of the Trinitarian God that pulls together our embodied realities and the reality to which we are moving.

Moving as a church. It is worship that draws us into communion with the living God and into communion with one another. And even as we experience the world around us sometimes seemingly as apocalypse and we choose vision grounded in resistance and steadfast vision, we have to become more and more a people of worship.

A people who cry, salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne of the Lamb. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever.

[42 : 55] Worship grounds our vision. Amen.