

The Other Side of Silence

Revelation 8:1-6

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#15 in our series "The Other Side of Silence"

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Message

We've been studying the Revelation since September, and hopefully, you've noticed that it's a rather strange book. It begins with 7 letters to 7 angels in 7 churches. But the Revelation is primarily a vision sent to the *people* in those churches, and in the vision everything is determined. [Peter picks up a scroll and holds it in his right hand.]

In fact, we see what appears to be all of space and time in God's right hand. In chapter 4, Jesus calls to John saying, "Come up here." John is out-carnated to a place where everything is good and everyone that's anyone worships the One who is on the throne.

In the right hand of God is a scroll sealed with seven seals, like the seven days of creation. I think John is looking at all of space and time from the perspective of eternity. That means that everything is set: earthquakes, famines, wars, the kings of the earth, the beast, the great harlot, the dragon, the New Jerusalem coming down.

Everything is determined, but as Jesus prepares to open the scroll—revealing the meaning of all space and time—the 24 elders fall down around the throne each holding a harp *and* something else . . . And I think the something else is really quite odd:

"And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Revelation 5:8).

You are the saints. The stuff in the bowls is your prayers—*proseuche* in Greek.

It literally means "prayer wish," "prayer desire" or "prayer request."

It's odd because it appears that God's will is set...

Just look: all of space and time is in His hand...

But look! There are your prayers outside of space and time . . . stinking up the throne room as God unwraps the meaning of space and time...

Are your prayers determined by space and time or do they create space and time?

In John 14:12-13 Jesus says, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."*

Ever since I learned the magic formula in junior high, I've prayed saying, "In Jesus' name Amen." But I haven't gotten whatever I've asked... And yet, I've witnessed numerous signs and wonders, several healings, and experienced one myself—but it hasn't been whatever I want, whenever I've said, "In Jesus' name."

In Mark 11:24 Jesus says: *"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."*

"Whatever you ask... believe that you've received..." which makes me wonder, then why would you ask, if you already believed that you've received it? Why would you ask, unless you just enjoyed asking . . .

"Believe that you've received it (perfect tense) and it will be yours (future tense)."

Well, I've tried, and it doesn't seem to work. So I think: I better try harder! I try to work up faith; I use more words and better words.

Jack Lou was an old friend and fellow Presbyterian pastor in California.

One day, a fellow approached him after the service and said,

Speed prayer has revolutionized my life! I'm planning to open an academy and teach it to others, and I want you, Jack, to be a part. With speed prayer, so much more can be said!

I have developed a system of designating requests with symbols. For instance, family concerns are designated "F." Arguments with my wife are category "3." That's an "F-3." A workplace argument is a "W-3"; African missionaries are "A-7." So you petition God saying, "A-7, W-3, F-3. In Jesus' name, amen." What do you think, Jack?

Jack realized the guy was serious, so he said, "Wow . . . that's really great. You should also develop speed fasting. That way you could fast between breakfast and lunch, and you'd never have to miss a meal!" The guy just looked at Jack and then said, "You're not taking me seriously...?"

Sadly, we do take guys like that seriously. Actually, every human word is a symbol like A-7, W-3, F-3. We think we'll be heard for our many words and better words.

And we wonder, "Does prayer work?"

Asking the question, "Does prayer work?" is a little like one of my children asking another of my children, "Does your conversation with Dad work?"

You know when they were little children, I almost always knew what they wanted before they asked it, and yet, I still wanted them to ask . . .

But if they tried to ask with more words and better words, it usually didn't work: "Please please, please! You said. I deserve. I want. I need...I'm telling Mom."

If I were God, I think I might get sick of all our prayers...

You may remember that Bruce Nolan wanted to be God, in the movie *Bruce Almighty*, and God Almighty granted Bruce's request. Bruce got the job and then didn't know what to do with all the prayer requests.

Clip from *Bruce Almighty*

Bruce: *This creepy whisper thing has to end!* [Acting quite overwhelmed, flustered, and annoyed.] *Prayers. Prayers . . .*

[With newly found resolve.] *Okay prayers.*

[Looking up at God in frustration] *I need a script, something concrete, concentrate... Files!*

Let all prayers be organized into files. [Suddenly, the entire room fills with innumerable file cabinets. Bruce is hidden in the midst of them.] *Well...that takes care of the voices. Not exactly a space saver though!*

I know... [the filing cabinets quickly disappear from the room] *prayer post-its!* [A barrage of post-its fly towards Bruce. He, the entire room, and his dog are all covered in post-its.]

If I were God, I think I'd get sick of all our prayers. To be honest, I get sick of my own prayers. In fact, there are certain kinds of prayers that can just totally stress me out—to be specific, *proseuchome*—prayer requests.

If I try to pray through a list of requests before I go to bed, it can get me so worked up I'll never sleep... I'll pray something like, "God help Mom with this, and give peace to so and so in the hospital...etc. etc."

And then I'll start thinking, "If I were a better son, I'd remember to call mom in the morning, and if I were a better pastor I'd go visit so and so before I meet with that family for breakfast... I better get up and make a note in my calendar... And God I prayed for peace and I'm not feeling any peace—how long until you give me peace? And oh yeah, in Jesus' name, amen..."

Remember Revelation 6:9? At the opening of the 5th seal, the witnesses who had been slain for the Word of God, under the altar, pray, "How long Oh Lord until you judge and avenge our blood?"

Avenge is the word *ekdikesis*, which means to make right.

And that's really all our *proseuchome*: every prayer request is that God would make it right; we might not be sure what that means, but we want God to make it right—*ekdikesis*.

Well, the witnesses cry, “How long oh Lord?” The witnesses are Old Testament saints like Jeremiah and Ezekiel (that have been slaughtered for the Word), and they’re crying out, “How long until you make it all right?” They do that in the Bible; you can read about it. And they’re still doing it wherever they are: “How long oh Lord until you make it all right?” It’s like they can’t sleep ’cause (do you remember) they’re each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, chill out until more folks are martyred just like them. That’s weird—crazy.

Well, I just wonder if God gets sick of the incessant chatter—our many words.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, “When you pray, go into your room and shut the door. Don’t make it a show... your Father will reward you in secret. And don’t think you’ll be heard for your many words... your Father already knows what you need before you ask him...When you pray say, ‘our Abba, our Father in Heaven...’”

A while ago, I found an old videotape in the front hall closet. It’s a tape of my parent’s backyard before they moved... I’m taping, and there is this incessant chatter in the background; my three-year-old son, Coleman, following me around constantly saying “Daddy, Daddy, Daddy” and asking me all sorts of questions, to which I would say, “Yes Coleman, maybe Coleman, sure Coleman, OK Coleman...”

I don’t remember the questions. But just hearing “Daddy, Daddy, Daddy” on the tape almost broke my heart. I remembered. It was like sweet incense that filled the air and informed everything I did.

So anyway:
Does prayer matter?
Does prayer work?

In John 14:14 Jesus says, “If you ask ... anything in my name, I will do it.” Then in John 16:24, during the very same conversation at the last supper, Jesus says, “Henceforth, until now, you have asked nothing in my name...”

Holy Cow! They’d lived with Him for three years through thick and thin. They’d seen—and done—some mind-bending signs and wonders, but still hadn’t asked one thing in Jesus’ name.

What does it mean to ask in Jesus name?
And why would we ask if we already have?
Saint Paul writes, “*All things are yours, you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s*” (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

Now I’m not saying that I understand this stuff, I’m just hoping that the Revelation will help us *believe* this stuff.

Revelation 8:1-8

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at [In the Greek, literally “on”] the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

Revelation 8:1 “*When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence...*”

That’s not what I would have expected... This is the pinnacle—the 7th seal.
Now the Scroll is open... and silence... *all* of Heaven is silent.
Yet, all of Heaven is a symphony.
Remember the four living creatures never stop saying, “Holy, Holy, Holy.”
And God constantly upholds all things with His Word.

It’s silent but maybe God is still speaking...

Remember Elijah’s cave.
The wind rent the mountains, but God was not in the wind.
After the wind an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake.
After the earthquake a fire, but God was not in the fire.
And after the fire a still small voice...
Or as it says in the ESV footnote “the sound of a thin silence.”

I once heard God speak with human words . . . so I know He can do it.
He speaks to my wife with human words. She has the gift of the words of knowledge.
I know that God can use human words... To be honest, I get really mad at God that He doesn’t do so more often.

But you see that assumes that human words, clarify the Divine Word.
But think about it, human words must always be a reduction of the Divine Word.
Like taking Love, nailing it down, and turning Him into law (knowledge of good and evil on a page).

The Divine Word must always be emptied to be understood by us . . .
But perhaps not to be *known* by us or to *know* us.

Sometimes, I can just sit with Susan in silence and far more is communicated in silence than a million human words on a page.

Revelation chapter 8 verse 1 . . . silence . . .
But maybe God is still speaking...
Or maybe He’s waiting for us to speak...
Like a new father waits for his baby to say, “Abba...Dada...Papa...”

Soren Kierkegaard wrote, "...One is speaking when he remains silent in order to show the listener that he is beloved. One is speaking... when he listens."

There's this great scene in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, when Aslan reveals himself as the one who's always been with the boy Shasta in a million different forms, in a million different situations.

Shasta asks this presence in the dark, "Who are you?"
And the voice in the darkness responds, "One who has waited long for you to speak."
As if everything had been arranged so that he would speak.

So does prayer matter?
Well, here in Revelation 8, it's like, the only thing that matters...
It's the sweet incense that rises before the throne.

But in verse one, all of Heaven is silent, which I think would imply that all of us, the 144,000 and the great multitude around the throne, are silent. And all those chattering witnesses under the altar are silent.

Many commentators argue that all of Heaven is silent because the witnesses under the altar are silent because God has answered their prayers for vengeance by throwing fire on the earth in the form of lightning, thunder, and earthquakes . . .

But the lightning, thunder, and earthquakes don't happen until *after* the silence . . .
They're not the reason for the silence. All that the witnesses would have seen, after their prayers for vengeance and before the great silence, would have been the opening of the 6th seal, which revealed some slaughtered Lamb.

And isn't it a weird idea that Jesus would answer their prayers for vengeance with *that* sort of vengeance,¹ when over and over Scripture says that vengeance belongs to God, and Jesus told us to love our enemies and pray for those that persecute us?

When the Lamb was slaughtered He cried out: "Father forgive."
And then, there was an earthquake; the sky grew black and the earth shook.
Maybe that was vengeance? "Father forgive."
Maybe it was vengeance, but not a vengeance of this world.
Maybe their prayers were answered, but not in the way they would expect.

The thing that moves the earth and shatters every wall of stone is forgiveness . . . *as if* forgiveness *is* vengeance as if kindness to enemies is like burning coals on their head.

Well, at the opening of the 7th seal, every tongue is stopped, for something is revealed.
At the opening of the 6th seal, some may have caught a glimpse, but they couldn't fully understand the meaning.

¹ Romans 12:19-21

At the opening of the 7th seal, the meaning would be revealed to all.
What do they see at the opening of the 7th seal?

Well, now I'll try to put human words on something, for which, all human words fail. And only an encounter with the Divine Word will do. They see the Judgment of God

Let's review:



John sees a scroll sealed with seven seals in the strong right hand of God.
Seven is tremendously important because the Bible begins with the seven days of creation and on the Seventh Day everything is finished—all of space and time.

So the seven days of creation reminded us of this: (See next page)

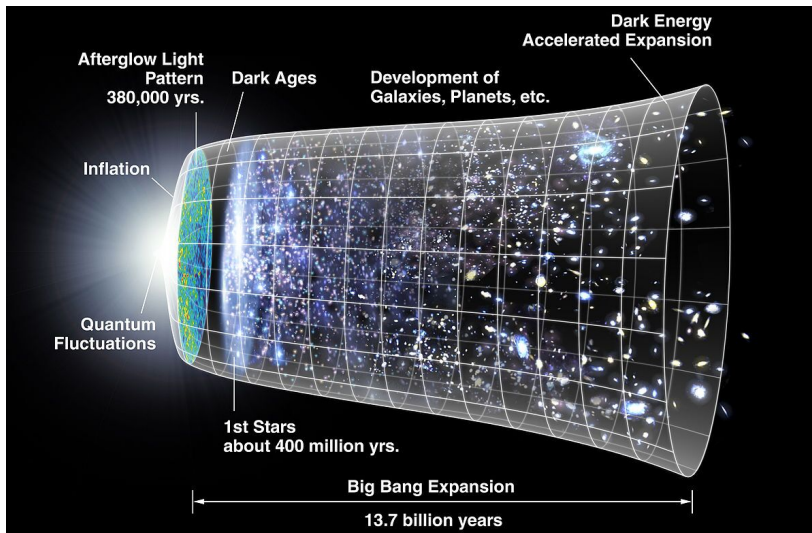


Figure 1 Image credit: NASA / WMAP science team

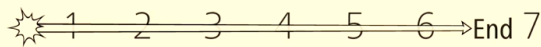
This is a diagram of all space and time from NASA.

In Jesus' day it was the common idea that God created all things in a Sabbath week of creation days that were each at least a thousand years long. So, God created all things in six eons or ages.

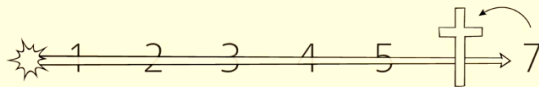
Some physicists would even argue that 13.8 billion years from the standpoint of the earth is 6 days from the standpoint of creation or the CBR (Cosmic background radiation).

Whatever the case, the ancients thought that this Seventh Age would be different from the six ages for on the Seventh Day everything would be good. And the Seventh Day was an endless Sabbath Day (no evening and no morning).

They thought time looked something like this:

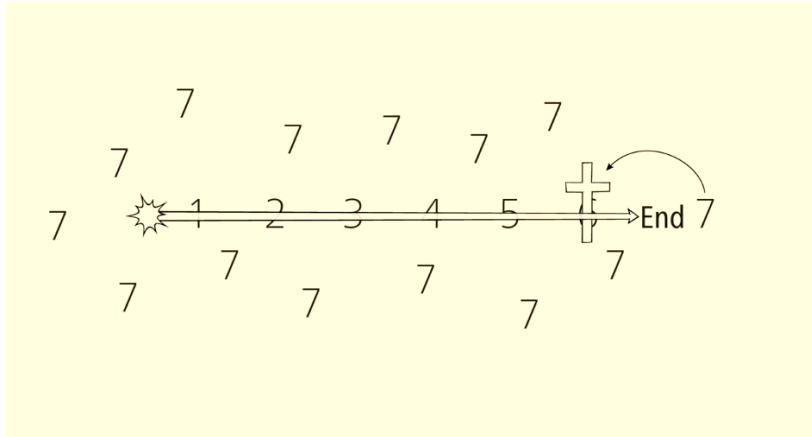


Or maybe something like this:



For on the 6th day of creation, on the 6th day of the week, at the 6th hour, eternity invaded time as Jesus hung on the cross, the sky grew black, the earth shook, and Jesus cried “it is finished.” It was the end of the ages and the beginning of eternity, and so . . .

Maybe time looked something like this:



Since Jesus is the Beginning and the End. He is the presence of God and in Him we live, move, and have our being. Space and time are in His hand, like the scroll is in the hand of God.

And so, what they see at the opening of the seventh seal is the Seventh Day of creation, which is the revelation of eternity, which is the Judgment of God.

Genesis 1:31 “*And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.*” *Everything—very good.*

(You know if you saw that everything was good, you probably wouldn’t beg God to make anything good. You wouldn’t demand *ekdikesis*...)

Genesis 1:31b-2:2

Everything... was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.

At the opening of the 7th seal, they see God’s Sabbath Rest.

Throughout the Scriptures God’s people are commanded to be very good at not doing things—that is *sabbath*—it means stop. Six days they are to work, and on the seventh, they are to stop.

There are three places in the Old Testament where God explains why:

- ✓ Exodus 20: You will stop because *I* created you.

- ✓ Deut. 5: You will stop because / delivered you.
- ✓ Exodus 31: You will stop because / sanctify you... / justify you.

At the opening of the 7th seal, they see the Judgment, the 7th Day, the Sabbath, and the Jubilee.

At the opening of the 7th seal, they must see:

- ✓ The Judgment of God
- ✓ The 7th day of creation
- ✓ The Sabbath
- ✓ The Jubilee

They see the Jubilee. The Jubilee was the Sabbath of Sabbaths, to be celebrated after 49 years in the 50th year—a Pentecost year. In the Jubilee, prisoners were released, all debts were forgiven, and people returned to their homes. You'll remember that Jesus came after the 490 years in Daniel's prophecy.

You may also remember that He stood up in the synagogue in Luke 4 and read from Isaiah 61, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, sight to the blind... and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (that's the Jubilee)."*

Isaiah 61:2 *"The year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God."*

That's weird, but read Isaiah and you'll see it's a weird and holy kind of vengeance; the Messiah will bring out righteousness, and make righteous, by trampling the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God, which makes blood that is wine and wine that is blood. He will do it alone. You see? I think He *did* it on a cross.

At the opening of the 7th seal, they must see:

- ✓ The Judgment of God
- ✓ The 7th day of creation
- ✓ The Sabbath
- ✓ The Jubilee
- ✓ The Vengeance
- ✓ The Atonement

Jubilee begins with the Day of Vengeance, which is also the Day of Atonement.

Leviticus 25: On the Day of Atonement the Israelites were to sound the trumpet *throughout* the land [So, it will probably take more than one trumpet (maybe like 7)]—atonement had been made and the Jubilee would begin.

Atonement, Vengeance, and Jubilee are all the same event somehow. It seems strange but makes sense. It was on the seventh time around on the seventh day at the blast of the seven trumpets that the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. God hates the walls which separate and behind which, each of us hides.

- Atonement means “at *one*-ment.” To proclaim Jubilee is vengeance upon all the walls that we hide behind; it’s vengeance upon all self-centeredness, shame, and pride.
- Atonement is vengeance upon the self-righteous prison of the human ego.
- Atonement is what Christ accomplishes on the cross. And . . .
- Atonement is what’s described in Revelation 8:1-6.
The 7 angels are given 7 trumpets.
And then another angel (and remember “angel” means messenger) comes with a golden censer for offering incense.

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest (and *only* the high priest) would offer incense and then go behind the veil to sprinkle the blood of sacrifice upon the Mercy Seat, which was the throne of God on top of the Ark of Covenant.

This angel offers incense and mediates our prayers.

Jesus is the Angel of Yahweh.

He is also our High Priest. He is the only mediator between God and man.

He mediates the new and eternal covenant and...

He offers up our prayers.

The Book of Hebrews describes how He goes into the Holy of Holies on our behalf—but not with the blood of bulls and goats, but with His own.

In verse 3 of Revelation 8, this Angel doesn't just stand *at* the altar.
He literally stands *on* the altar.

And He is given much incense. Who gave Him the incense?

Well . . .

- How about three wise men from the east who gave Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh?
- How about the prostitute, or Mary of Bethany who anoint Him with fragrant oil?
- How about the woman in the house of Simon the leper who pours a bottle of pure nard (worth a year's wage) over Christ's head a few days before He's offered up? It was a fragrance that would've still filled His nostrils as He hung on the tree.
- How about Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who anointed His body with seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes before they placed it in the tomb.

Do you see? The picture is absolutely breath-taking:

For 1500 years they'd been sacrificing lambs and the Lord is the Lamb.

The Witnesses cry from under the altar, how long until you judge and avenge our blood on the earth? And then they see that God avenges their blood with His own blood.

It's always been His blood. The Life is in the Blood... and He is the Life in *all* blood. He's the life in *your* blood.

Perhaps the Lord says, "Vengeance is mine," because all the blood is His, and He chooses to bleed for all... once and for all—all of space and time.

Hebrews 7,8, and 9 describe how Jesus is our High Priest who has secured for us an eternal redemption by means of His own blood, in an eternal covenant.

Hebrews 9:26 *"He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages (the aions) to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."*

The end of the ages (the *aions*) is the end of time and the edge of eternity.

They see eternity.

They see the way that things truly are.

They see themselves worshipping the Lamb on the throne.

They see when and where I Am is.

They wake up from the illusion of their own sovereignty;

And see that God is and always was sovereign.

They wake up from the illusion of their own control.

They see "God is Salvation."

At the opening of the 7th seal, they must see:

- ✓ The Judgment of God
- ✓ The 7th day of creation
- ✓ The Sabbath
- ✓ The Jubilee
- ✓ The Vengeance
- ✓ The Atonement
- ✓ God is Salvation

And “*It is finished.*” The Gospel is Eternal.

And “it is finished.” Actually, it’s eternal. The Gospel is Eternal (Rev. 14:7).

At the 7th trumpet, in chapter 14 an angel flies across the sky proclaiming an Eternal Gospel to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.

They see “God is Salvation.” And *everyone* falls silent.

Why are they silent? Well . . . why do people normally speak?
Why do you normally speak?

You might have to think about this a while... but,

Don’t you normally speak to make things right... *ekdikesis*

The world needs your judgment to be right... and so you speak your word.

Don’t you normally speak to create your world?

Don’t you normally speak to create yourself in the image of God?

Don’t you normally speak to atone for yourself?

To save yourself... even if you call it saving others?

Don’t you normally speak to create yourself, redeem yourself, save yourself, and justify yourself?

Well, what if you saw that you were already justified and everything was “very good?”

You might stop speaking for a time—*shabbat* in Hebrew.

Romans 3:19-24

...that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law [You know? That’s the knowledge of good and evil, written down on a page in black and white] no human being will be justified in his sight... But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law... the righteousness of God through [the faithfulness of] Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift...

You can’t justify yourself if you’ve already been justified.

Why do you speak? Why do you pray?

Isn't it usually to improve your self, justify yourself ...or save yourself?

So you use the creator to create yourself, use the judge to justify yourself, and use the savior to save yourself.

Which means you say that you pray in Jesus' name.

But you're actually using Jesus name, using it in vain, and praying in your own name.

Jesus' name means "God is Salvation," but you think *you* are salvation.

We all do; we all think we are saved (created, justified, and made right) by our own will, our own judgment. But we are saved by the Judgment of God. [Peter points to the communion table.]

That thing that thinks you are salvation is your ego.

In the Light of "God is Salvation," your ego must die—stop, *shabbat*.

Clip 2 from *Bruce Almighty*

Bruce: *I don't want to be God. I want you to decide what's right for me. I surrender to your will.*

[Bright light envelops Bruce's body. He then realizes the light is actually a semi truck coming at him full speed ahead. The scene changes to heaven.]

Bruce: *(Talking to God) Am I?*

God: *Can't kneel down in the middle of a highway and live to talk about it son!*

I love that clip. And it's true. But I'm serious as a heart attack. The Revelation of Jesus, which is the revelation of "God is Salvation," which is the revelation of the Judgment of God will destroy your ego, the illusion that you are salvation, that walled city in which you hide. It will destroy that old man that you so often think you are. That can be terrifying, but it is absolutely Good, for it is the presence of *the* Good: "God is Salvation"—Jesus.

Well, the 7th seal is opened and everyone falls silent for about half an hour. Some say that's how long it would take the high priest to make atonement behind the curtain, on the Day of Atonement... I don't know.

Everyone is silent. They cannot speak, and maybe, God will not speak, for He's waiting for all of us to say something . . . new . . .

All are silent until the angel that stands on the altar, who had been given much incense, mixes His incense with our incense and the fragrance rises before the throne...

Hebrews 7:25 *"He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."*

Romans 8:26-27 *“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”*

On the altar Jesus mixes our prayers with His prayer:

“Father forgive them, they know not what they do.”

On the cross He prayed our prayers:

“My God my God why have you forsaken me...”

That’s our line. That’s the first line of Psalm 22 and I believe He prays it all the way through to verse 31:

“They shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it... It is finished.”

Then . . .

“Into your hands, I commit my spirit.”

That’s the very Spirit that descends into us crying, “Abba Father.”

Romans 8:15 *“When we cry Abba Father, it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God...”*

He descends into the temple that is our heart and cries, “Abba”...

He stands on the altar and mediates my prayers.

I pray, “Give me money.” And Jesus prays, “Father help Peter to rest in you.”

You pray, “God, I hate you.” And Jesus prays, “Abba, she longs for you.”

Brennan Manning used to tell of a minister friend, for whom prayer no longer seemed to work ’cause God didn’t “work” for him. He resigned his church, abandoned his family, and fled to a logging camp in Canada.

One winter afternoon, as he sat shivering in his aluminum trailer, the portable electric heater suddenly quit. Cursing this latest evidence of a God-forsaken world, this minister shouted, “God, I hate you!”

He sank to his knees weeping. And then, there in the silence, he heard Christ say: “I know; it’s okay.” And then this shattered man heard The Lord weeping within him.

He stood up and started home.

God will silence our ego, but perhaps we can humble ourselves. I think that’s the meaning of the Sabbath commandment. I think that’s why we need to come here and sit before the table of the Lord. I think that’s why David wrote: “I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul like a child quieted at its mother’s breast, so is my soul” (Psalm 131).

John 3, Jesus said, *“This is the Judgment, the light has come into the world...”*

You know Light is eternal—ask a physicist—for a photon of light it is always now.

Physicists, philosophers, and theologians have always said now is the point that time touches eternity.

In John 12, Palm Sunday, Jesus, the Light, lifted His head and said, “Now is the Judgment.” See? I think your ego can only exist in time—*chronos*—chronological time.

We will soon read that the beast “was, is not, and is to come.” The Beast is an imitation Christ, and antichrist and so is your ego. It’s powered by shame and pride from the past and your anxiety for the future. It’s all about what you have done or think you can do. But it’s not about the Truth that is now.

Eckhart Tolle wrote, “For the ego to survive it must make time—past and future—more important than the present moment.”

You see? If you really had faith in Grace, I mean if you really could trust in the depths of your being that you were right now justified, sanctified, and created in the image of God . . . *now*, I suspect . . .

You would have no ego. And I think you would be free.

You would be awake in the New Creation.

You would see, what John saw, the New Jerusalem coming down.

You would know, in other words, that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

And it would change the way you spoke... and the way you prayed.

The words might be the same, but the will behind the words would be holy.

You wouldn’t pray in anxiety and fear, but in faith, hope, and love.

You would know that...

You can’t achieve faith, you can only *be* faithful.

You can’t manufacture hope, you can only surrender to Hope right now.

You can’t make love, you can only let Love make you and all around you.

You can’t control Love; you can only dance to Love as if it were a song in the atmosphere all around you and the only way you can dance to it is to surrender to it—right now!

Faith, Hope, and Love are an eternal Kingdom that is all around you. That means that you don’t pray things into existence. Instead, you pray existence into things.

You say, “**Let your kingdom come, let your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.**”

You pray existence into things; your prayer connects Eternity to time.

If you really believe “It is finished,” I think . . .

- You would believe that all things are yours, you are Christ’s and Christ’s is God’s.

- You would ask for whatever you desire, believing that you already had it, and knowing that you will have it... because you actually do.

-You would ask for whatever you desire, but whatever you desire would be God’s desire. It would be Good and right.

-You would ask in the name of Jesus, for you would know “God is Salvation.”

I don’t know, but I think maybe this is what the contemplatives and the mystics have been saying all along. So, this last year I’ve been working at taking time for silence. That is just being still and present to God in the now.

I may speak some anxieties and fears in the beginning, but then I sit in silence trusting that I don't need to defend myself from God with words. And then after about a half-hour of silence, I speak, and I think that those words are somehow different; they're eternal.

God has created all things that I would speak those words. And speaking those words I am involved in the creation of all things. So, are those words determined or free? Perhaps they're both, for in that moment, the Creator and I are somehow one. I am.

"We need prayers of words, yes," writes Madeleine L'Engle, "the words are the path to contemplation; but the deepest communion with God is beyond words, on the other side of silence."

Your life is to be a prayer spoken from the other side of silence.

I think I can probably best explain with one of my favorite stories. It's a true story. It happened about twenty-four years ago. It was the first time that I ever saw Jarek Conelly sit still.

Jarek was four at the time, and I was performing a marriage ceremony for his mother Janielle and her boyfriend Andy. Janielle was white. Andy was white, and Jarek was chocolate brown. His flesh said, "Andy is not my Father." And now Andy was taking his mother.

I suspect that's why Jarek was always moving. Always lookin' for trouble. He was restless and couldn't sit still. During the ceremony, he was everywhere, out of control. He started out as the ring bearer, but by the time we got to the vows, someone else was holding the ring and Jarek was imprisoned between two relatives in the front row.

Janielle said her vows; Andy said his vows. Jarek was squirming in his seat. I was starting the ring ceremony when suddenly Andy stopped me. In front of everyone, he turned around, fixed his gaze on Jarek, and said, "Jarek!" And Jarek froze; everybody froze. Then Andy said:

Jarek, I love you with all my heart.
And I will always be your daddy.
And you will always be my son."

Jarek Conelly did not move; he did not make a sound for the rest of the service. I didn't get to hear it, but I bet the next word he spoke was something like, "Daddy, Abba, Father."

Last I heard, Jarek was doing well and planning to graduate from West Point—where they do demand a little bit of self control.

Well I'm just saying, I hope y'all take time to be still before the Judgment of your Father. Be silent... and then speak.

Communion

This is the Judgment of your Father. This is the eternal covenant. On the night He was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying this is my body given for you; take and eat, and do this in remembrance of me.” And He took the cup saying this is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. This is the Judgment of God. [Peter looks at the Communion table]. Look around you. All of this is temporal; it’s fading away; it’s illusory. And this is Eternal.

[There is silence as Peter prepares communion.] The Father is calling you to come to His table and place the eternal in the temporal. Be born again, eternal life in Jesus’ name. Pray with me and say, Thank you Father.

Benediction

I hope that you take time just to be silent before the Lord...

There is one last verse in Revelation 8 that you might have thought I forgot about. Listen to this: *“Then the angel [I think that’s Jesus] took the censer [in which had been our prayers] and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake (Rev. 8:5).*

You kind of think: “Why would He do that?” Well, the Gospel doesn’t change. It’s been there all along. Listen to Zephaniah 3:8-9

“Therefore wait for me,” declares the LORD, “for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed.

“For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord.

May you watch, and wait . . . and then speak.
In Jesus’ name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio or video version of the sermon on this website and don’t be shy about informing us of errors.