

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Revelation 8 - Worship in Heaven

Revelation 4-5

Prayer: *Father, again I thank you for gathering us together again, I thank you for the privilege that we still enjoy of being able to meet and gather freely. I pray this morning, Lord, as we do just that we'd be accompanied by your Holy Spirit, that you would guide us, direct us as we open up your word. This is a challenging section of scripture. I pray that you would just be there to give us not only the ability to hear it, to abide by it but to make it of permanent value. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we spent quite a few weeks going after the first three chapters of Revelation. We were looking at that first vision that John has of the Lord Jesus Christ. And as you recall, the vision consisted of seven different letters sent by Christ to the angels in charge of seven different churches.

We saw the good and the bad and the ugly in these seven churches. The church of Ephesus is doctrinally sound but it's lost its first love; Smyrna is suffering severe persecution; Pergamum and Thyatira

have allowed false teachers; Sardis is dead; Philadelphia is blessed; Laodicea is vomitus and yet each one regardless their performance is precious to Christ.

His church is still in its infancy but already it's seen decades of intense persecution and the believers are weary, they're beaten down. From Nero to Domitian they've seen the power of Rome that dominates everything.

Remember, John is on a penal colony on an island having been exiled and on that island once again he's worshipping when he receives a second vision that's a vast departure from the vision that he received in the first 3 chapters. We pick up at *Revelation 4:1*, it says: *After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."*

Well after three chapters describing the struggles of God's kingdom on earth, John is invited into a second vision of a convergent kingdom. That's a kingdom that exists simultaneously with the struggle of life that he's experiencing, a kingdom that on rare occasion actually intersects with ours. I mean we've seen hints and bits and pieces of that kingdom in scripture. If you recall

Jacob was once given a vision of a stairway to heaven. He's lying there, he sees heavenly beings ascending and descending on a heavenly throne or heavenly stair. Daniel spoke of seeing a heavenly throne. Paul tells us in a vision that he was once taken up to what he calls the third heaven. He says: *And I know that this man was caught up into paradise -- whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows -- and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.*

So Paul says he's taken to a place that's literally indescribable. And now John, he finds himself in the same place with the very same problem. He has to describe a worship service taking place in heaven itself. It says: *At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.*

Just picture the dilemma that John has. He's been given a vision of God on the throne and he's trying to translate it into words that we humans can understand. He's trying to translate a God who -- quote -- *"dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see."*

So how do you describe the indescribable? Well, his best option is to describe it as he does all of his encounters, by describing it in terms of things that he's familiar with, of symbols that somehow try to capture things that essentially have no frame of reference.

I mean how would you explain the colors of a rainbow to somebody who's born blind? I mean you'd have to reach out to something familiar, you'd have to try to bend that explanation to describe something that for them is basically indescribable. And so you might use warmth and coolness to describe the difference between black and white, you maybe describe different emotions that would describe some of the other colors. In short you'd be forced to paint a picture that might seem strange or absurd and you'd be experiencing the same kind of problem that John has. He's trying to describe God on his throne and he's stuck trying to use symbols of jewels and rainbows. So does God look like Jasper? Does God look like carnelian? I don't think so. I mean, is his throne a rainbow with an emerald hue? Well that's John's best attempt at describing it.

And so we see God's throne itself is surrounded by other thrones as well. It says: *Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.* There's at least six

different interpretations of just who these 24 individuals are, but tradition and scripture itself seems to identify them as those that were seated on the thrones, six to a side surrounding God's throne as the patriarchs, that's the twelve sons of Jacob who made up the twelve tribes of Israel and along with those twelve are the twelve apostles.

Jesus has promised, you understand, that we humans, we're going to live and reign with him. So John's given a vision of what that might look like. And perhaps the most important thing to understand here is that the highest honor and the greatest position in all of the heavenly realms of course given to God. But surrounding God and occupying the second highest position in all of creation is us. I mean we are represented by the 24 elders. And here's the amazing thing about them: All of these 24 elders were at one time fallen human beings. Every one of these elders who are sitting in God's presence was at one time a sinner saved by grace. They're clothed in white garments, and the white garment points to Christ's perfect righteousness that was given to them by faith, faith in his death and resurrection.

Verse 5 says: *From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and*

before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

Well, when Paul was caught up into heaven he said he heard things that couldn't even be uttered. And so once again we find John trying to give utterance to something that's essentially indescribable. And again, he's trying to describe the scene of immense power, something akin to the thunder and lightning that rumbled when God came to Mount Sinai and it terrified the people so much that they begged Moses, please make it go away. And the seven torches represent the intense light of God's all seeing omniscience emanating from his Holy Spirit. And he says God's throne sits before a sea that is like glass.

It says: And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: The first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

Well these are angelic beings and these ones represent all of God's

created living beings. They have characteristics of two different types of angels. They have the characteristics of the seraphim that you find in Isaiah and of the cherubim which is found in Ezekiel. But every one of them is given over completely to the worship of God, and these angels represent all animate life bowing down before God. You know, we sing a song that's taken directly from scripture that speaks of even trees consciously giving God glory. You know, we sing *Isaiah 55:12* which says: *"The mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."*

Well here in John's vision of his heavenly worship service all of creation is giving glory to God. Verse 9 says: *And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."*

Well the chapter ends and it ends with this scene of astounding glory and it's actually captured better than most not by a description but by the hymn that we're all familiar with, the hymn

that was written by Reginald Heber three centuries ago. He wrote:
"Holy, holy, holy, all the Saints adore thee, casting down their
golden crowns around the glassy sea. Cherubim and seraphim falling
down before thee which wert and art and ever more shall be."

Paul says this heaven is filled with things that cannot be told.
And even though John has done his very best trying to describe it,
we understand only the tiniest fraction of what is being expressed
here. But one thing becomes very evident as we watch heaven itself
and that is that everything in heaven is about worship. The 24
elders, they fall down and worship and they're casting their crowns
before the throne.

You know scripture has a lot to say about this whole idea of what a
crown is, and a crown is basically a reward that's given to us for
what we've done while we're here on earth. *James 1:12* says:

*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he
has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has
promised to those who love him. Peter says: And when the chief
Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

And just in the recent past we've heard Jesus' words of warning to
the believers at the church of Philadelphia. He says: *I am coming
soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your
crown.*

It's evident from the our text this morning that one of the greatest joys, one of the deepest pleasures a human being will have in heaven itself is the ability to take the crowns that we has earned in this life, not to put them on display, not just to wear them, not to use them in any way but other than to simply cast them at the feet of the Master. I mean if worship is the ultimate pleasure in heaven -- and it is -- then our ability to partake in that pleasure will have much to do with the crowns that we've earned while we're here living our life for Christ.

You know, I spoke about worship at length in our study of 1 John, and I said what if I told you that the peak human experience, the source of the greatest joy and deepest pleasure is not sex, it's not great wealth, it's not eating great food or living in great real estate, in fact think of anything that you can that would constitute your idea of a peak human experience and just insert it into this definition. None of it would come close to the pleasure of worshiping God.

Just consider this: God is the designer of all life. God made the eagles and he made them want to fly; he made fish and he made them want to swim; he made lions and he made them want to roar; he made cattle and he made them want to graze. They all do that, they all do exactly what God intended them to do not because they have to

but because they want to because that's the way God made them. And at the very top of God's creation is the one creature who bears the image of God himself and that is us, that's we human beings. But understand, God made us also with great intent and purpose and he designed us for one thing primarily and what he designed us for is worship.

It was C. S. Lewis who pointed out what is absolutely unique about human beings and it's a reflection of precisely what we were designed for and that is unique to humans. Lewis pointed out human beings don't experience the peak joy of anything until they can express that joy through praise.

Here's how he put it in his book *Reflection on the Psalms*. He said: "I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete until it is expressed. If it were possible for a created soul to love and delight in, the worthiest object of all, and simultaneously at every moment to give this delight perfect expression, then that soul would be in supreme beatitude."

What Lewis is saying is that the supreme delight for a human being

would be not just to be passionately in love with the greatest thing of the universe but to somehow have the ability to perfectly express that love.

Well, he goes on to say heaven is where that happens. And again Lewis put it this way. He says: "It is along these lines that I find it easiest to understand the Christian doctrine that 'Heaven' is a state in which angels now, and men hereafter, are perpetually employed in praising God. To see what the doctrine really means, we must suppose ourselves to be in perfect love with God-drunk with, drowned in, dissolved by, that delight which, far from remaining pent up within ourselves as incommunicable, flows out from us incessantly again in effortless and perfect expression. The Scotch catechism says that man's chief end is 'to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.' But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him."

There's no other creature on the face of the earth that is designed that way. I mean, I've used this example over and over again so forgive me for going back to the same old well but I just say picture yourself going to the finest restaurant and eating the greatest meal you've ever been served with the love of your life, and now picture that exact same meal eaten by yourself at home

alone. The pleasure is diminished completely just by the thought of eating it by yourself. Deny yourself the ability to say something as simple as "isn't this amazing" and suddenly the joy of a great meal is not so joyful. That's what marks us as different from the animals.

I've said I don't care how wise or thoughtful your dog may be, I guarantee if you gave him his greatest meal, the first thing he would want is some solitude to allow him to eat it alone, eating it all by himself. The last thing on his mind would be sharing it or even praising it to his fellow dogs. That's one great difference between the animal kingdom and human beings. You see, our joy is completed by praising something because we were made for praise and worship. And what John is showing us in his vision is that everything in our life that has meaning is about worship. And because worship is so central to our existence, the enemy takes great pains to muddy the waters concerning it.

I mean, just think of that word "worship." Worship conjures all kinds of negative images. You think of ecstatic people barely under control on one side or high church services where nobody really knows what's going on on the other side. It's another reason why we get uncomfortable with these displays of worship.

I mean deep down we wonder why is it that God seems to be demanding unending praise? Why is it that all creation including the 24 elders who represent every one of us, why are they caught up so much in this idea continuous worship? Truth be told, if John said I was given a vision of heaven and it's like a giant Cabela's and everybody's got their own lake and everybody's got fishing boats made out of diamonds or somebody else says, no, no, no, actually it's a heavenly Target and everybody's got perfectly created and manufactured stuff and you can pick anything you want because you can build a house for nothing and maybe somebody else would say, oh, no, it's a glorious garden and everybody gets to pick beautiful plants and trees that you grow in your own garden.

The fact is when it comes to heaven we are incredibly earthbound in our thinking. I mean, chances are we just don't know what to think, and that's understandable. I mean consider Paul actually was briefly in heaven and this is what he said. He said: *"EYE HAS NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."* Paul says even heavenly vision can't begin to describe it.

The idea that we would spend all of eternity praising God in worship is frankly a turnoff to many people, even Christians if they were honest about it. Deep down inside they have this nagging

question of why, God, do you even need to be surrounded constantly by worship? Well the fact is God doesn't need our worship. Much in the same way, if a group of particularly sensitive and wise ants decided that they would build a series of mounds on my property that spelled out the message "Tom is great," I would be impressed, I'd be astounded at that. I'd probably take pictures and call the newspapers and get an article written about it, but the fact is they're ants and I'm a human being and receiving the worship of ants is not something I need or crave. And ants are far closer to us in terms of power, glory and might than we will ever be to God. And the point is that God is so far above us that even the thought that he demands worship of us in some craven type of needful way, it's frankly blasphemous. And God's heaven is organized around worship for our sake, not for his.

The vision of worship we've been invited to in chapter 4 is literally a window God gives us into heaven itself. I mean the privilege that so few Old Testament views had snapshot views of has now been written out for all of us to see. And from a worldly perspective the church at that time, it was a church under siege and it seemed to be losing badly, but from a heavenly perspective God's absolutely still on his throne and the events are unfolding exactly as he desires.

Chapter 5 opens with a worship service taking an ominous turn. It says: *Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.*

Why is John so upset and why is it no one is worthy to read the scroll? And just what is inside that scroll? Well once again there's lots of different interpretations, there's lots of different understandings. Some say that the scroll is the title deed to earth itself; others say that it's Ezekiel's book of lamentation or Daniel's sealed book of the end times. Perhaps the simplest answer is it literally is the secret of life itself, the unfolding of the end of all things. One author describes the contents of this scroll as a book of judgment, salvation and restoration; judgment through the unleashing of the broken seals which we'll see in the future, salvation of both Jew and gentile, and restoration of a new heaven and a new earth and all of that is contained in the scroll, but no one's worthy to read it, even the angels.

You know, Peter tells us in 1 Peter there are things in heaven that even angels long to look into but cannot. So John is weeping loudly because no one, not even angels is found worthy when he's approached by one of the elders sitting on the throne. And it says: *And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."*

Now I want you to picture this. I know it's hard but try to picture the scene that John sees here. Picture myriads and myriads of angels, there's God himself sitting on his throne, he's surrounded by 24 elders sitting on their throne and there's jewels surrounding the throne, there's a sea of glass in front of it, lightning and thunder is surrounding God and the attention now shifts to the worthy One, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, the conqueror who alone has been deemed worthy to open the seals. We've been told over and over again that Jesus was going to come first as the Lamb of God and then return a second time as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. That's the very name he's referred to by the elder. And yet John describes the Lord Jesus at the center of this worship. This is the way he describes it. He says: *Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.* So all of the attention, all of the attention and

all of heaven is focused on Jesus the warrior lamb? I mean everything about this description is the exact opposite of what you would expect.

New Testament scholar Eugene Boring put it this way, he says:

"This is perhaps the most mind wrenching rebirth of images in literature. The slot in the system reserved for the lion has been filled by the Lamb of God." And not only is the lion of Judah described as a lamb but further still, it's a lamb that's been slain. I mean there's no mistaking that this worthy one has done what no one else could ever do. But what he has done is unique, he has won by losing. He has purchased life itself by dying. And so the victorious one who all of heaven is worshiping, who is receiving this worship not as a lamb lying slaughtered but as a lamb standing as though it had been slain. And note where it's standing. It says: *Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.*

Who do we already know was seated on that throne, the one who's holding out that scroll? We know that's none other than God the Father. So how can the Lamb be standing in the exact spot where the Father is seated? Well Jesus revealed that during his time on earth. He said, *"I and the Father are one."* The Father and the

Son are at their very core, at their very center one. Scripture says of Jesus: *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.*

Revelation goes on to say: *The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.* And again, you have to remember that John is seeing these things symbolically. I mean, if you look at these descriptions literally, you wind up seeing some pretty grotesque creatures, not the least of which is a standing butchered lamb that has seven eyes and seven horns. Not exactly a pretty picture. I mean the horns and the eyes and even the lamb himself is to be understood as representing the essence of who Jesus is. Seven horns are symbolic of power; seven is the number of perfection, of completion. Symbolically we see a lamb who is all powerful. Seven eyes symbolize the Spirit of God which is all knowing and all seeing.

And so this omniscient and omnipotent Lamb now does what no one else in the entire universe can do. Verse 7 says: *He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.* And what follows is what one author described as -- quote -- "an explosion of worship." It says: *And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls*

full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

You know usually around Christmas time you hear Handel's Messiah, sometimes it's also played on Easter. It's also known as the hallelujah chorus. I'm sure you're all familiar with it. Recently you've probably heard of those things called flash mobs. There's a large group of singers, they'll assemble in a mall, some kind of public place and spontaneously launch into the hallelujah chorus. The funny about it, it seems to touch that part of everyone that's

made for worship. People get genuinely moved to tears, from believers to flat-out atheists because, like I said, we were made for worship. And Handel's Messiah touches that nerve in nearly everyone who hears it. I have to tell you, that piece can't hold a candle to the singing that erupts into heaven itself as the lamb takes the scroll from the Father. I mean the chorus begins first with a 24 elders and the four living creatures, they assemble each with a harp and they have a golden bowl full of incense, and inside that golden bowl are the prayers that you and I have prayed -- quote -- *"They were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people."*

So the next time you start thinking your praying is a waste of time, the next time you feel overwhelmed that your prayers seem to be going nowhere, understand that every prayer that you and I ever pray is in that bowl of incense being offered to God in heaven. And they sing a new song explaining how Christ's worthiness is because -- quote: *You were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.*

And so that chorus is then joined with a far greater one consisting of a voice of many angels -- quote -- *"numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand"* and this massive

crowd then circles and surrounds the throne, the creatures and the elders and they all sing: *"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"* And then that chorus is joined by the largest and greatest chorus in the history of mankind. Listen to what it consists of: *Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them. And finally the elders and the four creatures along with all of the angels and every single creature in existence, they all join in singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"* The four living creatures said, *"Amen,"* and the elders fell down and worshiped. All of God's creation has gathered to give praise, honor and worship to a lamb who conquered by being slain.

So what does that mean to us practically? Well, the lesson that Jesus has for us is one that his whole life represents. It's one that is unique in all the world's religion, something that only Christianity proclaims and that is you win by losing.

Today we are surrounded by conflict, I mean, everywhere you look there are groups pitted against one another. And what is so disconcerting about the conflicts we see breaking all over in our culture is that they seldom yield to reason any more. You know it

used to be you could argue your point and if you made the better argument, you won the day. Those days are gone. Now it seems as if the very idea of logic and persuasion is just gone by the wayside. Truth is determined by who shouts the loudest even if that truth defies the very rules of logic. Women are now men. Men are now women. Justice now centers on who's the oppressor and who's the oppressed. Sexuality is a personal choice. Arguments are made but no one's listening. We have a new term to describe it as well. Actually it may be an old term but it's becoming an incredibly popular weapon of choice. It's called the heckler's veto. If somebody brings up a viewpoint different than mine, I shout them down. I heckle them so relentlessly that only my side gets a hearing and thus my heckle becomes a veto. There's no longer two sides to an argument regardless of how valid those sides may be.

You know the fallacy of false balance also known as bothsideism says that there are some arguments that don't have two sides. Granted, I get it, and that's true. I mean if I make the argument murder is wrong, there's not another side to that, no one's going to argue with that. But the concept of bothsideism has now been stretched to include so many different dissenting opinions on everything, from climate change to COVID relief to the right to protest at abortion clinics. Many now believe that most cultural

issues no longer have two sides, they only have one. And the person with the most power gets to be the one whose side gets heard.

Well, as believers and evangelicals we ascribe to the notion that our job is to present our side of the most important argument there is so that people can decide for or against the kingdom of God.

"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool."

So we seek to reason by telling the world that God became a man, that he lived his life out flawlessly, that he went to the cross so that we could claim his righteousness for ourselves and by faith stand before God now worthy of heaven. That's our argument. That's the reason that we live.

What happens when no one chooses to reason any more? What happens when the heckler's veto and bothsideism enable raw power to decide who even gets the opportunity to present an argument? What has happened over and over in mankind's long history is that once reason no longer becomes an option, then power becomes the go-to response, and that inevitably leads to war, civil and otherwise. Jesus' victory gives the lie to that thinking. You see, the

greatest power in the universe is not the power of power itself, it's the power of love as Jesus demonstrated it. It's the love that he expects us to demonstrate as well. Jesus said: *"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."* See, that's the essence of winning by losing.

You know, the one thing that we've seen in this heavenly worship service is the convergence of two different kingdoms. John's invited into a worship service that was occurring contemporaneously with his exile in Patmos and it was a time of unprecedented persecution and destruction. Christians were being thrown to the lions, they were literally being set on fire as human torches. John is isolated and he's alone. Those who claim Christ as savior certainly appeared to be on the losing side. I mean a lamb that was slain in over fifty years has only managed to garner some 10- to 20,000 believers in maybe forty or fifty churches. But you see Christ had the ultimate advantage. He's the king. He's the conqueror and the ultimate victory he always knew would belong to him. He knew that the future would see believers numbering over two and a half billion in over three million estimated churches. The vision of worship that John was invited into was living proof

of the power of Christ's love and Christ's way as literally the greatest power in the universe.

And so in a climate that's hostile like the one we are in today, it's easy to forget the fundamentals that Jesus laid out for us in the sermon on the mount. You see, our natural inclination is to fight back. Jesus' approach is altogether different. He said: *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."* We are the sons of the Father and so we do likewise. I mean we know for certain who will be ultimately victorious and so like Father and like Son, we too win by losing. Let's pray.

Father, I just thank you for your word. It gets so easy to get caught up in all that's going on around us and to just adopt the very same attitude of the viciousness we see in this world. Lord, you have a completely different approach. The whole idea of winning by losing is trusting in you, trusting in the one that Peter says "who judges justly," that he will be the one who ultimately makes things right. Our task is to follow you. Our task is to get our marching orders from you. We pray for that

*grace, we pray for that wisdom, we pray for that courage and we
pray that in Jesus' name. Amen.*