

Sermon Revelation 5

The Book of Revelation is one of the most difficult books of the Bible to understand and the more I read it the more layers I find to unpack. It deals with strange visions, dramatic images and of course those ever mysterious numbers. But it does have a plain meaning and chapter 5 is no exception – it is a book written to support those fresh faced newly formed Christians. At the time of writing the Judeo-Christians would have been going through times of suffering, persecution and misunderstanding of the way they were, by others. Revelation does talk about the times of stress and disasters, it does cover the death and carnage that will happen but it is very specific that it will all end in eternal glory. It was written not long after John would have witnessed Jesus ascending into heaven just like Elijah we have heard about from our Old Testament reading this evening. Was this chapter written by that same John, probably not but it would have been a disciple of that same John and just as we pass on information from one generation to another then the same would have been here; the beloved John would have spoken about Jesus

ascending into heaven and sitting with God and parallels would have been made between Jesus, the Chosen one and Elijah whom all Jews are still waiting for as a second coming. Life for Christians then was full of tough times; people were not accepting of the new ways and new beliefs nor were they believing of the occurrences that people had witnessed.

At present our world seems to be going through times of great trouble. Our nation is divided and there is no point in my giving you numbers as you know them already. People of different faiths and cultures after that vote were persecuted, today we have social media and it can be an instant rebuckle of any person not fitting into the norm (what indeed is the norm). There seems to be a great battle between the good and the evil just like John tells us about in Revelation. It is a battle between Satan and God.

I don't know about you but the 22 innocent lives lost in Manchester has seemed like a battle. On the face of it the evil of the suicide bomber has caused so much carnage and when I read about the ages of the victims it breaks my heart – so much in front of their lives and now their

lives are snuffed out by that evil act. I keep thinking about those letters that you can have on wrist bands - W.W.J.D. (What Would Jesus Do)- and I think What would Jesus have done in that situation – I believe that all the way through Jesus would be talking about Love. He would have acted out of love. Each one of those taxi drivers trying to help the young people to be reunited with their parents and then not accepting any payment – that is an act of love. The people providing the paramedics with coffee and food – that is an act of love; the nurses and doctors coming to the aid of the injured – that is an act of love; the people willing to give blood for those injured – that is an act of love. But the act of the suicide bomber is the act of hatred. And once the Lamb has defeated death, Satan is the defeated foe. Jesus has broken the power of evil. Love wins out over hatred.

Revelation chapter 5 is an immensely visual account of God sitting on his throne with the scroll in his right hand; the special scroll – the history of the world past, present and future. This scroll has 7 seals – 7, the number that symbolises wholeness and perfection. It is written on both sides so it is full of detail and complete and only the

Lamb, the sacrificed lamb, the innocent lamb; the pure lamb, the young lamb can open it; only the Lamb of God is worthy enough to open it – the crucified and risen Christ; the pure and perfect Christ; the accepted sacrifice, now with God in the centre. The Lamb has ascended into heaven. We are given the symbols of the root of Jesse; the lion of the Tribe of Judah; we are given the genealogy of Jesus; Jesus from the house of David; from the tribe of Judah – Matthew traces back Jesus’ root right back to Abraham. We are being given the run down on Jesus. The slaughtered lamb; The lion who won his victory as the slain lamb. He has 7 horns and 7 eyes which means he has the power, wisdom and insight of God’s spirit. He is worthy to open the seals and view God’s meaning of the world.

We do not know the future of our world but division and argument will not be a way forward. What Would Jesus do? Well he would not be talking about sending back anyone with a strange sounding name or a different coloured skin. He was renowned for eating and being with those who were the outsiders. He would be the one who

would be helping those injured and not worrying about the colour of their skin.

Like the cloak being picked up by Elisha and him seeing the ascension into heaven and thus the power of the insight of Elijah is passed on; then if we can pick up the cloak of love and seeing the rising of Jesus through the images and good deeds then we can pass on the teachings of love if we see what is truly happening in our world.

What has come from that incident in Manchester is in part a positive outcome in amongst the heart break. People are indeed talking with words of love saying that the individual was not a Muslim but a terrorist; he was not following the true teachings of Islam but the teachings of a fanatical wing from a warped mindset. The word Islam (the name of the faith of Muslims) means peace and submission to the will of God. So how could a Muslim be involved with any kind of mass killing; let alone the taking of their own life. The beast that is the extremist will not have victory but God will, and these acts of violence will not result in them having ultimate power; only the loving kindness of God will show us the ultimate

truth. Yes, the people are scared and yes families are reticent to let their young child out of their sight and certainly not allowing them to go to concerts alone. It will cause rifts in families but tough love is one that is tough! What is coming from Manchester is a message of love and we will go on living our lives so that the terrorist will not poison us or our minds. The brainwashing stops at them and the outpouring of love comes from us.

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