

Word for Friday:

“I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection of the dead.” ~Philippians 3:10-11

Yesterday I posted a video from the Bible Project that talked about apocalyptic literature, a significant genre of literature in the Bible interspersed primarily through the Old Testament prophets, portions of the Gospels, and especially the book of Revelation.

The words “apocalyptic” and “apocalypse” in this context do not refer to the end of the world, but are drawn from the Greek word *apokaluptō*, which means to “reveal” or “uncover.” I really appreciated the animation in the Bible Project video of a character who reads apocalyptic and, when she looks outside, the world begins to change color. This is a great visual representation of what apocalyptic literature is meant to do for those who read it. It is meant to help us see with God’s sight by using highly symbolic pictures and images.

This type of literature is especially helpful to people living through chaotic, confusing, and disappointing times. Many of us feel like that right now, don’t we? We don’t know who to trust. We don’t know how things will turn out. We feel that our world, and maybe we ourselves, are trending down instead of up. A lot of us start asking then, “Are we living in the last days?”

And here is where the changed sight that comes from apocalyptic is helpful. The answer to that question of whether or not we are living in the last days is yes, but those days may not be what we expect them to be. As the video reminded us, the book of Revelation is not so much about the *end* of our world as the *beginning* of God’s new world. And that world is already breaking into this one through the radical, Spirit-dependent living of the people of Jesus Christ.

Think about it this way; how much of Jesus’ teaching seems crazy? If we’ve been paying attention, an awful lot of it! “Turn the other cheek,” “Go the extra mile,” “deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.” These ways of being human, of opposing evil... they sound just like getting walked all over. And so his disciples must have thought as well when they first heard him teach – that’s why they were still ready to strap on swords the night Jesus was betrayed, and that’s why they ran away when Jesus was arrested.

But then something spectacular happened – Jesus died, but rose again to new life. And *that’s* what gives meaning to Jesus’ teaching. *That’s* how it makes sense. Not because it’s a new to-do list, but it’s the way of life in God’s world, which is now invading ours. That’s why Paul writes in Philippians 3:10-11, “I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection of the dead.

The cross, the resurrection, these are *apocalypse* moments, because they are moments when God pulls back the curtain and shows us his world breaking in.

And we are now part of that invasion force. Not because we keep a list of rules, but because we are beginning to live a new life, and we are beginning to find that it is better and even more powerful than the life we knew in the past. When we live that new life we too become an apocalypse, we become a pulling back of the curtain and the revelation of who God is, what He is doing, and what His new world looks like.

What would it look like to live as if we belonged to another world? It wouldn’t look like rule keeping, but rather a life based on faith that the old order, determined by power, is passing away, and God’s new order, based on love, is taking hold.