

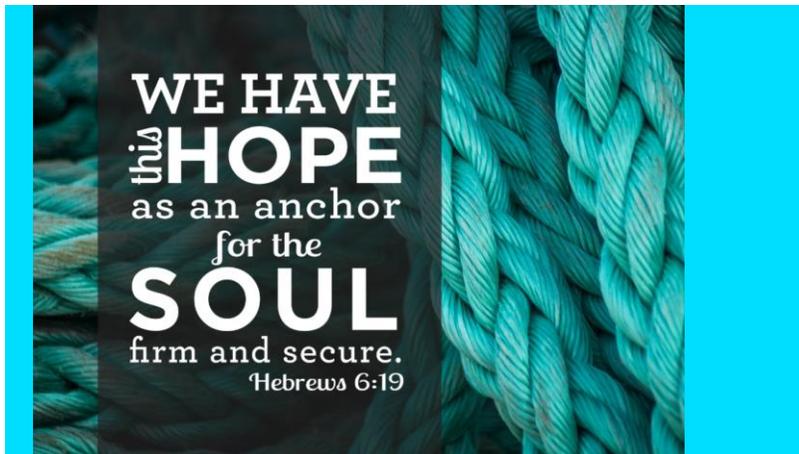
There is so much more happening in this world than can be seen with the eye or heard with the ear.

The passage we have just read, pulls back the curtains so that the seen and unseen realms are viewed simultaneously.

Revelation 6 reveals to us... the influence of heaven upon the earth.

As we now grapple with what is described in our passage, we must constantly keep before us what we have been shown in Revelation 4-5 and also remember the original audience to whom this letter was addressed – the seven churches of Asia Minor.

The vision that follows in the rest of this book was given to encourage them; it gave them not only a future hope, but one that was immediate; and this book similarly, encourages us and gives to us... as Hebrews 6:19 says...



...hope that is an anchor for our soul.

The Lamb is on the throne and he reigns.
Jesus Christ is the highest authority in heaven and on earth.
There is no one greater than him.

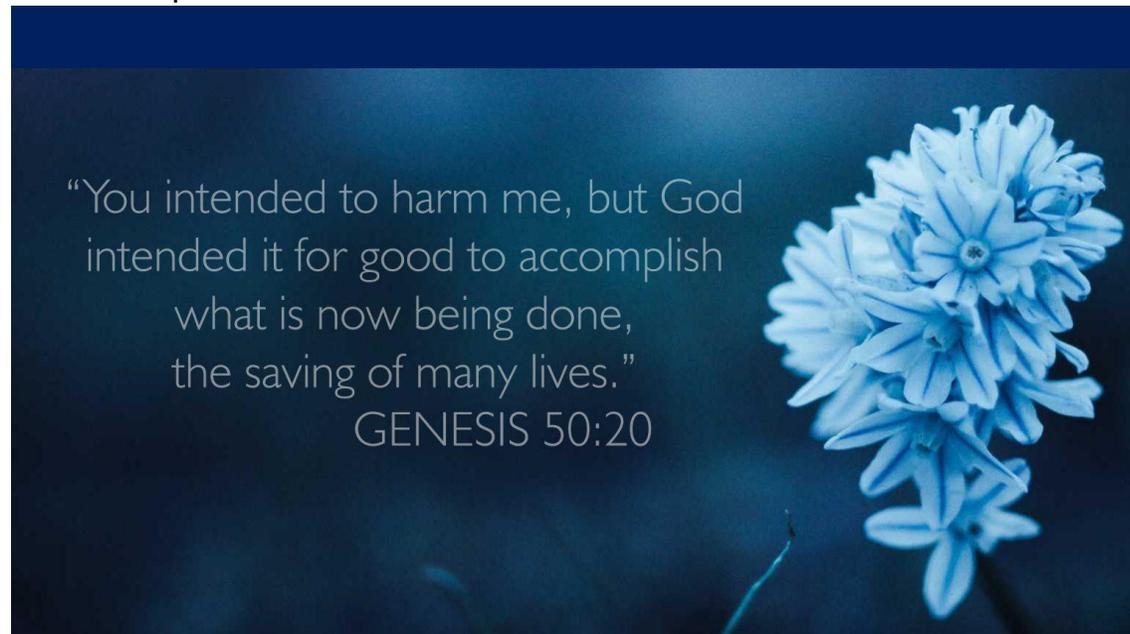
Even though it may look as if Jesus is not in charge, as if things in this world are out of control... the testimony of Scripture confirms....

Jesus reigns in the midst of his enemies (Psalm 110:2), and his church, in this present time, lives in the midst of those enemies.

GK Beale reminds us that Jesus' authority extends over 'disastrous circumstances.' In all things Jesus rules... even over situations of suffering; even over the trials and persecutions of his church.

In his great wisdom Jesus acts redemptively and judiciously...turning things intended for evil into the saving of many lives. **p.123**

As OT Joseph said to his brothers...



In Revelation 5, John saw and heard all of heaven praise the Lord Jesus in song, declaring the Lamb... to be the worthy One.

Why is the Lamb worthy? Because...



It is the Lamb who was slain.... who now opens in chapter six the seals of the scroll.

6:1 – ...the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals.
6:3 – ...the Lamb opened the second seal...
6:5 – ...the Lamb opened the third seal...
6:7 – ...the Lamb opened the fourth seal...
6:9 – ...[the Lamb] opened the fifth seal...
6:12 - ...[the Lamb] opened the sixth seal...
8:1 – ...[the Lamb opened the seventh seal...

Seven times the Lamb opens a seal.

This repeated emphasis impresses upon us that the Lamb uniquely is directing the flow of history.

History is going somewhere.

For the follower of Jesus, our hearts can be at rest – for it is not chance; nor randomness, nor chaos; nor the ruler of darkness who determines what happens on the earth; or what touches our lives.

In this present time, the kingdom of God is advancing here on the earth, directed by the hand of Jesus... and as it does it...



**The kingdom of God
“upsets the status quo,
it unmasks idols,
it flushes out evil,
and meets resistance.”
Darryl Johnson**

DJ, p.169.

This is where the followers of Jesus live out their faith.... in the clash between the kingdom of God and the reign of darkness...even as heaven’s mission of rescue continues.

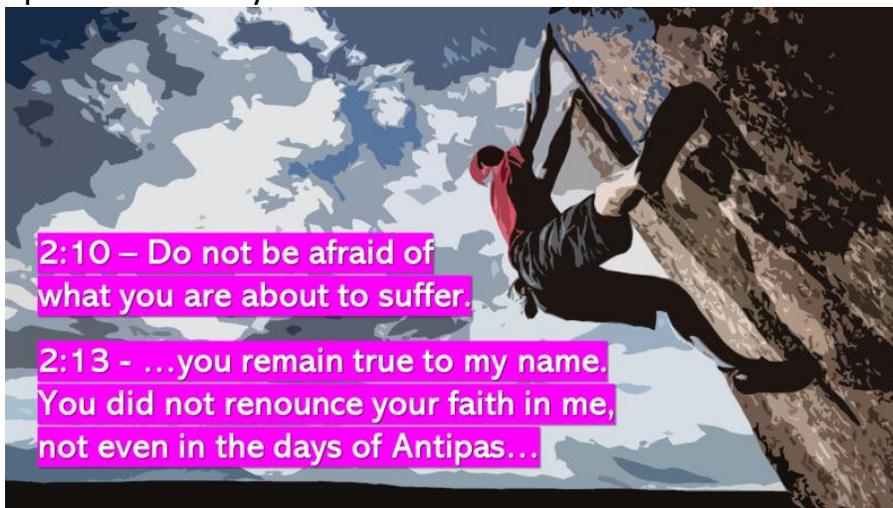
This is the truth revealed in the book of Revelation.

It is this perspective alone that makes sense of what Jesus said to his seven churches in Asia, and to all of his churches, in every generation, in every nation, and in every locale.

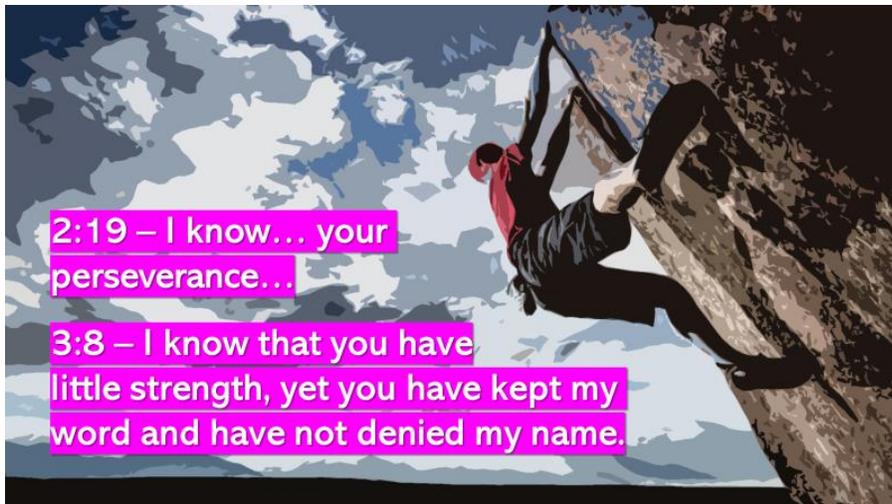
In Revelation 2-3, Jesus commended his churches for their perseverance, but also urged them to continue to persevere in the face of suffering.



Ephesus and Smyrna



Pergamum



Thyatira and Philadelphia

Jesus' message to those seven churches is applicable to his church today.

Jesus knows what his followers are facing.

He knows the suffering of his people.

Jesus is with his followers in their hardship, faithfully keeping the promise of Matthew 28:20 –

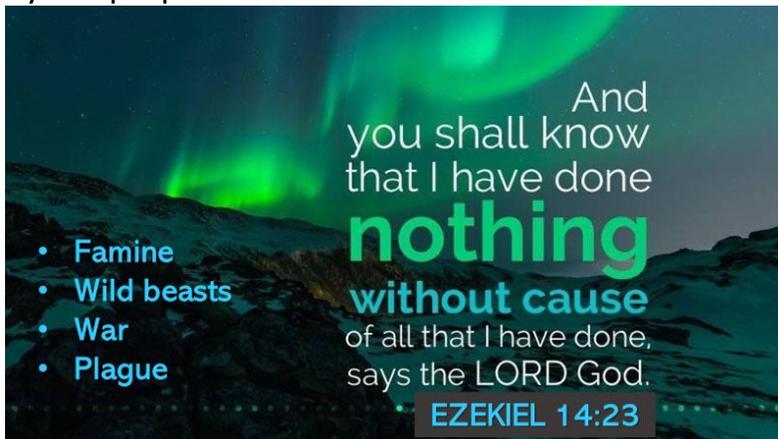


GK Beale writes that as the Lamb opens each seal, what was decreed is then executed on the earth. p.124

These are the things that had been prophesied by Jesus days before his death...



These also were the very things that had been foretold six hundred years earlier by the prophet Ezekiel...



What the LORD said through Ezekiel emphasizes his sovereign rule – I have done nothing with cause.

What the Lamb commands in Revelation 6 with the opening of each seal... is intended to show in the seen and unseen realms... the folly of sin... and the ruin it brings.

As the first four seals are opened by the Lamb, each in turn, the four living creatures, say in a voice like thunder...



Who are the four living creatures calling to?

Some suggest the four living creatures are calling to the four riders upon the horses.

Let me remind you who the four living creatures represent.

GK Beale believes... **these angelic beings...represent the whole created order of animate life.** p.104

Remember their appearance – Revelation 4:6b-8.

Like the twenty-four elders, who are also angelic beings, and who represent the church of Jesus in its entirety –in the OT and the NT era... the twelve patriarchs, representing the church before the coming of Jesus, and the twelve apostles, representing the church after the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, (Beale, p.102; DJ, p.139)... so the four living creatures are angelic beings who represent creation.

Why would the four living creatures call for forces to come that would ruin creation? DJ, p.169.

Creation already groans from its bondage to decay.



If the four living creatures are not calling the four horsemen, then who are they calling to?

Darryl Johnson believes they are calling to the Lamb... to come and establish his kingdom on the earth as it is in heaven. p.169.

This is where history is headed....



...when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus.

This was why, when Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them to pray, that the prayer he taught them expressed this same heart longing....



This is the prayer of creation... which groans in frustration... but with expectation!
“Come Lord Jesus!”

This is the prayer of the redeemed...as we too groan inwardly...but with expectation for the coming of our Lord Jesus...and the redemption of our bodies!

As the book of Revelation ends, Jesus assures his church...

22:20 – Yes, I am coming soon.

22:20 – Amen. Come, Lord Jesus

...and his church with love of their Savior and with longing for his appearing, responds...Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The tense in this verse is important.
Jesus did not say, “I will come soon.”
He said, “I **am** coming soon.”

It is with this hope, the soon appearing of Jesus, that the church in this present time, as Ephesians 6:11 says....

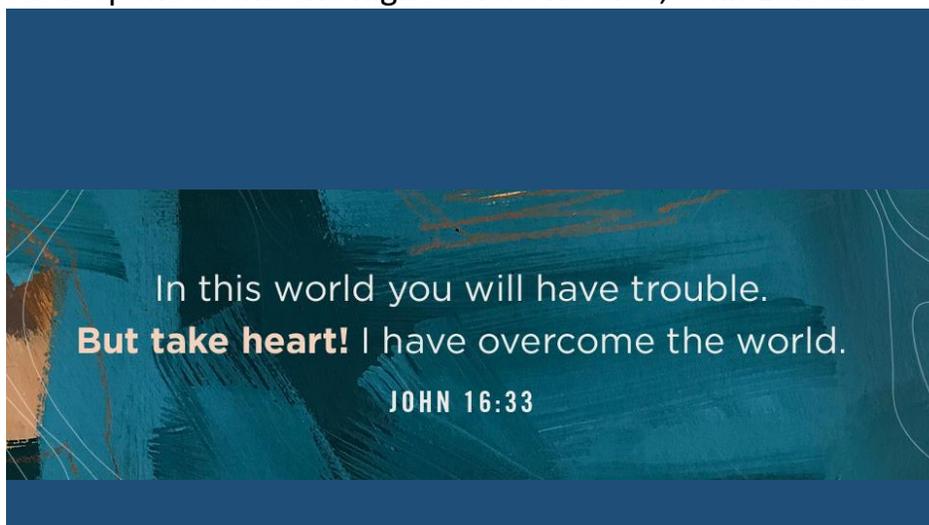


... takes its stand against the devil's schemes...and with the Lamb who was slain.

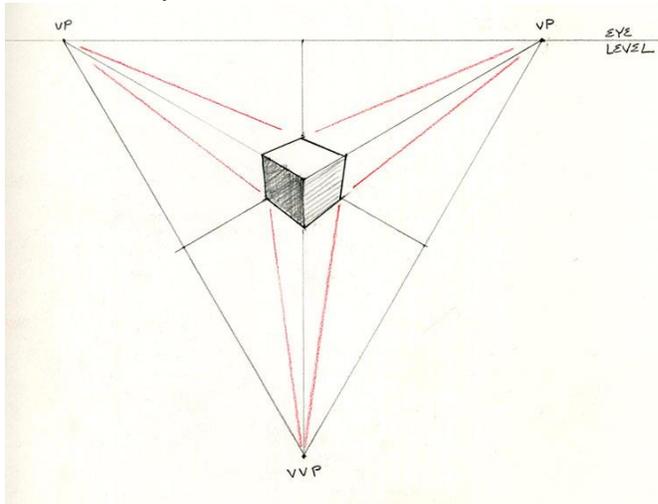
It is with this hope that the church... like the four living creatures... cries out to the Lamb, "Come!!!!"

What surprises every reader of the Revelation is how the kingdom of God advances in this present time...and here we encounter the wisdom and sovereign power of God.

But in this book we are not encountering new revelation. Jesus spoke of this the night before he died, John 16:33...



This is so important for the reader to understand that three times...



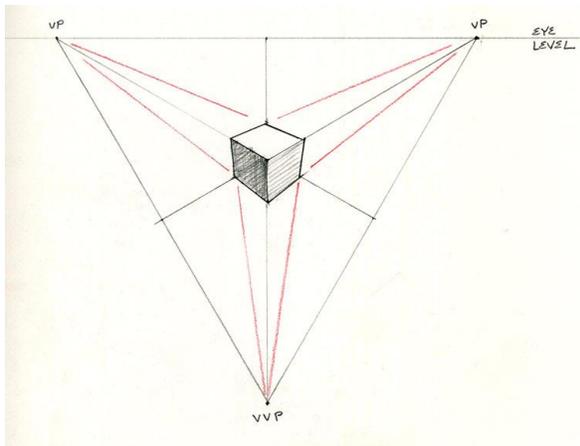
...with the seals, with the trumpets and with the bowls – the church of Jesus, in the words of Tom Wright, is “given different angles of vision on the same highly complex reality.” p.63.

This is a hard truth to receive, as well as to understand.

But like the story of the prodigal son... and like the teaching emphasis of Romans 1:18-32...



...in order to expose the folly... and the corrupting power of sin and its end result, which is always death, God will allow a person who stubbornly resists him to have their way – he will give them over, that is, he will allow them to do as they wish, which includes experiencing the consequences of the choices they make.



The vision of Revelation impresses upon the reader, three times, that what God does with individuals, he also does with sinful humanity.

From one angle, the triune God's answer to the problems and pains of this world, is to draw out the arrogant wickedness of humans to its full extent and contrast this with the Lamb, who is both faithful and merciful in bringing his people safely through.

From another angle, the triune God's answer to the forces of destruction, is to allow them to do their worst, to expose them, to reveal their true nature, and his sovereign power over them as they are ultimately banished to a place where they can no longer influence nor harm.

And from yet a third angle, we are shown the full horror of sin, and the justice of the triune God who inflicts upon the rebellious world of humanity, the equivalent of the plagues of Egypt, as he rescues his people and judges that dark powers that have ruined creation and enslaved humanity for so long. Tom Wright, Revelation, p.63.

Because of the love of God for the world, through the Lamb who was slain, he offers to humanity a way home to him.

We have been given a Savior from heaven and his name is Jesus, which means, Yahweh saves.

The prophet Isaiah, in 9:2, described a people who walked in darkness... and lived in a land of deep darkness.

That is the destiny of all humanity without God.

If the salvation of God is rejected, the message of the Revelation cannot be any clearer - there is no other Savior.

Only in Jesus is there hope.

Only Jesus can rescue a person from the power of sin and evil.

That is as far as we will go today.

As we continue to dig into this book, we will see the triune God who turned the sufferings of the cross into triumph, turn the sufferings and troubles of this present time into the most glorious victory.

Follower of Jesus you have an anchor for your soul.

The Scripture says this hope is firm and secure – Hebrews 6:19.

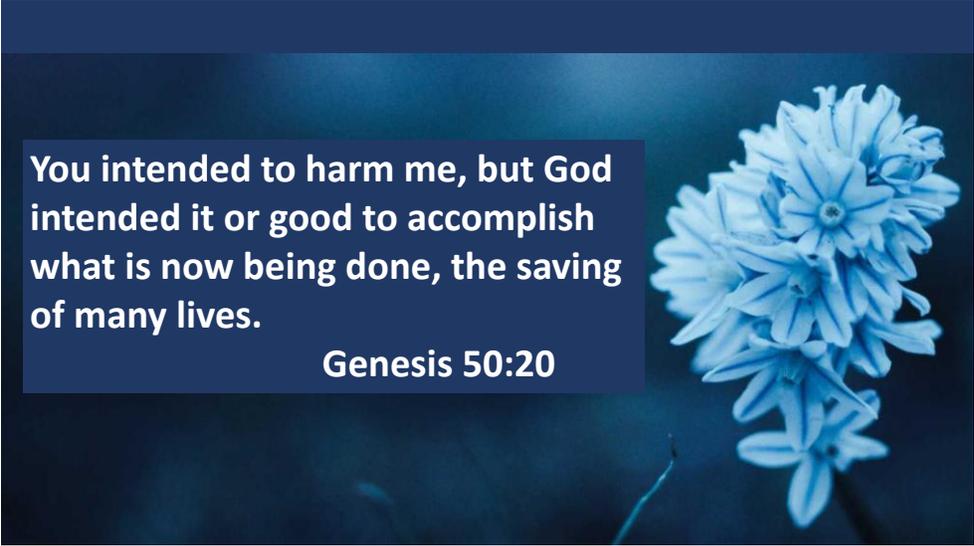
Your hope is not based upon the strength of your faith, but on the strength of your Savior - he holds you fast.

The One who holds you fast... reigns over the entire universe – seen and unseen.

He is the same, yesterday, today and forever!

He is directing history to the accomplishing of his good will and purpose.

What was true of God in the days of OT Joseph – is true of him today.



You intended to harm me, but God intended it or good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Genesis 50:20

I urge you to live each day in this truth, and to encourage your fellow brothers and sisters to do likewise.

The Lamb reigns!

The cry that moves history is the cry of the heavenly creatures as well as the redeemed – “Come, Lord Jesus!”

This is at the heart of the prayers offered up by the church.

“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

“Come, Lord Jesus!”

And his sure and certain promise is...“I am coming soon!”

Dear follower, persevere in your faith, hold on to Jesus, stand your ground, do not give up.

Our Lord Jesus, our Savior is coming...soon!

We are a community of people who follow Jesus.
When we place our faith in him he, by the SPIRIT of God creates in us a new nature, that is like that of our Lord Jesus.

Jesus taught his disciples that he had come, not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom.
The culture we are endeavoring to build here at Sooke Baptist is a culture of servant leadership.

We want to say thank you to the staff this morning and give to them a gift as an expression of our gratitude and our love.

Bob is our custodian – he is faithfully here each Saturday, cleaning the building.
We appreciate you Bob and the good job that you do.

Erica is our administrative assistant. Erica, you have a gracious spirit in all that you do. You go about your tasks with a joy that both encourages and inspires. We appreciate you! Thank you!

Maddi is our children and youth pastor. And during these months of Covid she has also stepped into the role of leading the worship of this church on Sundays.
Maddi, you too serve this church with joy and with an eagerness to honor Jesus.
We appreciate you! Thank you!

There are many others who like their Savior serve with distinction and generosity.
Our finance team, our Grace Garden team, the SYNC youth team, our Life Group leaders, our Leadership team of deacons and elders.

Thank you for the investment of time that you make.

Michael and Carol you are not on staff, but you are here each week, investing many, many hours in making it possible for us to life stream our worship gatherings. Thank you for all that you do!

Merry Christmas Church family!!