

# The Gruesome Call

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[ 0 : 00 ] Father, we confess before you that we don't really like hearing warnings from you. We confess before you, Father, that there's a big part of us who would like you to be more like a care bearer than the living God.

And so, Father, we confess before you that we do not like hearing warnings. And, Father, we also confess before you that our yearnings and longings for your promises are also very weak. So we ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would come and fall upon us gently and deeply as we think upon your word. We ask, Father, that you fan into flame within us a deep remembrance of your warnings and that you would fan into flame within us a deep longing and yearning for you. For you yourself and for the promises that you make to your people. Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. I'm going to talk about hell next week.

Now that I've got your attention, I'm going to talk about hell next week. And the reason I am is because, and you might have noticed in the text that Ken just read to us a few moments ago from the book of Revelation, that it ends, or close to the end of it, you have two characters thrown into the lake of fire.

[ 1 : 33 ] And this image of the lake of fire is in the text this week, so I could talk about hell this week. But the image of the lake of fire is in next week's reading, which is Revelation chapter 20, in an even more powerful sense, because this week, if you were listening very closely, you'll know that God puts, and I'll talk about this a bit more in a moment, the beast and the false prophet in the lake of fire.

And next week, the text will have the dragon, who's the devil, and death, and all of us who are not in Jesus thrown into the lake of fire.

So I thought that what I would do is that rather than talking about the lake of fire both weeks, I'll talk about it next week. So if at the end of the sermon you think, oh, George is dodging, I'm going to talk about some gruesome things today.

But if you're thinking I'm dodging that, then I just want to let you know that I'm not dodging it at all. We're going to talk about it next Sunday. And I mention this specifically so that you could pray for me, that I do it well.

You might not know this. I can't remember if I've said it before, but I've developed this simple thing that I try to pray for myself every day as I'm working on the sermon, and the sermon every day leading up to the Sunday, at least a little bit.

[ 2 : 54 ] And part of the things I pray for is I use the acronym FACES as I pray. And I really like it because I do two things when I use it. First of all, I think I have God call up to my mind different faces in the congregation or different faces of people that I've been talking to about Jesus who don't come to any church.

And I pray for you. Not every one of you every time, but I'll think, you know, Father, you know, when this, you know, and I don't want to start naming your names, but, you know, as I open the word, as we gather, you know, please help the word to really touch this person.

I mention you by name. And FACES is also an acronym, and it's, I'll tell you sort of the order, and then you can see how it fits into a word. I pray that as I open the Bible and as I teach that my teaching will be simple, that it will be clear, that it will be apt, that it will be faithful to the Bible, and that it will exalt Jesus and exalt God.

And if you put that in an acronym, I pray that I'll, what I say will be faithful to what the Bible says, that it will be apt, that it will be clear, that it will exalt God, and that it will be simple.

So every week, I pray for FACES. I pray other things as well for my sermon as well. So please pray for me over this coming week, and pray FACES.

[ 4 : 22 ] Pray for me for FACES, and pray for FACES in the congregation as well, so that when we talk about this very difficult text about the Lake of Fire, that I will be, that FACES will characterize what I have to say.

So next week, I'll talk about the Lake of Fire. But this week, we still have, at the end, the second half of the text is pretty gruesome.

But before we get to the gruesome part, we have to see what leads up to the gruesome part. So if you have your Bibles with you, and hopefully you do, if you could open your Bibles up to Revelation chapter 19.

And if you've forgotten your Bibles, at the front of the church here, there's three Bibles, and you can feel free to take one of them if you want. Just get up out of your seats, come and take them. You can keep it as a gift, or you can return it afterwards.

And if you're not that familiar with the Bible, the book of Revelation is very easy to find. It's the last book in the Bible. And Revelation 19 is right towards the end. And so those of you who are tracking how we're going through it next week, it's Revelation 20, then 21, then 22.

[ 5 : 26 ] And let's start reading. Because the first part is very glorious. It's a very, very interesting text, Revelation 19. It has both two of the most profoundly beautiful images of salvation and the future for us to long for, which defy our imagination, and it also has something gruesome, all in the same text.

And it begins like this, Revelation chapter 19, beginning at the first verse. After this, I, that's John, heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven crying out, Hallelujah! Where are the kids to help us, eh? Okay. Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just, for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality and has avenged on her the blood of his servants, his slaves, his doulos.

And just sort of pause there for a second. I didn't actually believe this at first when I was preparing my sermon, and I actually checked on it. But it's very, very funny.

Actually, hallelujah is a great Christian word. And we said it quite a few times earlier on in the service. We're going to say it a few times before the service is over. But did you know, I didn't know this.

[ 6 : 46 ] Maybe you did know this because you're a better Bible scholar than me. But the word hallelujah only occurs four times in the New Testament. And all four times that hallelujah occurs are in the first six verses of Revelation 19.

In fact, when I came across that, I actually checked on a computer concordance to see if it was true. Like, I actually doubted it. And it's true. It's a very, very common Old Testament word. But in the New Testament, it only occurs four times. And those four times are in the first six verses of the book of Revelation.

And it means praise God. Praise God. It's a call of acclamation. It's a call of encouragement for others. It's a personal call. I'm praising you, God.

Others, come on, join me in praising God. Hallelujah. And it's as part of this great song that's sung by the great multitudes of heaven.

[ 7 : 47 ] Hallelujah. Salvation and glory and power. Salvation doesn't belong to me. Salvation doesn't belong to a church. Salvation doesn't belong to an institution.

Salvation doesn't belong to a political philosophy. It doesn't belong to an ideology. It doesn't belong to a social class. It doesn't belong to an economic class. Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.

And that's the great cry. And not only are they praising God and shouting hallelujah, because salvation and glory and power belong to God, but the specific focus of the praising of God and the singing of hallelujah is because he is true and just, and now he has acted with truth and justice in judging evil.

God is praised because he is true and just, and now he has acted with truth and justice in judging evil.

That's why he's praised. That's sort of the heart of it. That's what the for is for. If you know salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just, for he has judged the great prostitute.

[ 9 : 04 ] And in terms of who this great prostitute is, if you're guests here, it's a bit of a confusing image. But we've been going through the book of Revelation. We started at chapter 1, verse 1, and

we're going to go right through to the end.

We're basically preaching through a chapter week, most weeks. And there's sort of four primary actors in the book of Revelation who are, in a sense, the organizers, the cheerleaders, the tempters, the enforcers, the source of longing and yearning that all are in rebellion against God. Four, in a sense, primary actors or images of actors that, in a sense, work with us as human beings in rebellion against God.

And in chapters 17, 18, and 19, it's been talked about the judgment of Babylon, or of the great prostitute.

And it's an image of the city organized in rebellion against God. Babylon, or the great prostitute, sometimes in the book of Revelation, it's referred to as Jerusalem, sometimes as Rome, sometimes as Egypt, uses a variety of different things.

[10:19] But it's a consistent image of the city. In a sense, that's politics, of culture, of entertainment, of everything that the city represents.

And we understand cities as a powerful type of image. And it's the city organized in rebellion against God. And that's what's being judged here.

And as I've said in the weeks that have gone before this, in some ways, there's both a future and a present aspect of this image of a city organized in rebellion against God.

That, unfortunately, in every city, so to speak, in the planet, even in the best, we can get the whiff of Babylon.

And in some cities, there is the stench of Babylon. And that's the present day. And those of us who are called to positions of leadership in government, or in the economy, or in law, or culture, are, in a sense, reminded by the book of Revelation to be sensitive to the smell of Babylon that develops in your city, in our city, and to act against it.

[11:40] Because this text isn't teaching anarchism, that no city should exist. At the end of the book of Revelation, it pictures kings and leaders of the world coming to Jesus.

So it's not condemning politics per se, but it's warning us that in every city there is at least the tiniest whiff of Babylon, and we should resist it.

We should not be enticed by it. We should flee it, and we should pursue that which honors and glorifies God, and which is for the true good of the city.

But there will come some day when there will be that great city, which only is of, which is, in a sense, is Babylon. And here we see in the book of Revelation that even though there can be some cities that just seem unbeatable and unbelievably influential, and it's impossible for us to imagine a time or a day when their influence will wane or will go away, that salvation and glory and power belong to our God and that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords.

And those parts of a city whereby there is the stench of Babylon, where there is, in fact, profound injustice, the murder of the innocent, where there is, in fact, profound oppression and injustice, where there is, in fact, the exaltation of evil, and there is, in fact, the bold, self-confident, blaspheming of God and denouncing God and turning it back on God and exalting of self and all of the terrible evil and the evil that befalls human beings as a result of such evil and the great evil that even as that has a great terrible consequence on ordinary human beings, yet so many ordinary human beings yet still have a great love and a yearning for Babylon.

[13:54] And even though Babylon seems to be so completely and utterly undefeatable and will not be turned back, there is, in fact, a God who does exist and Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords and he will judge Babylon.

And we will see his judgment. And when we see his judgment, we will realize that he is just, he is judged with complete fairness and even with mercy and goodness and truth and that there is no excuse and there can be no complaint because of the perfect justice of his judgment.

And we will see that perfect judgment and praise God and say, Hallelujah. Hallelujah. The living God is just and at the end he will be known as just and no one will have a valid complaint against him.

The living God is just and at the end he will be known as just and no one will have a valid complaint against him.

As I've been a Christian longer, I know that there's lots of terrible evil. Lately, for a variety of reasons, I've come across quite a few documentaries all around the Holocaust.

[ 15 : 27 ] And actually, so there's been several weeks in a row that my wife and I and the kids at home, we've watched on a Friday or a Saturday night, I think maybe once on a Sunday, documentaries connected to the Holocaust.

And I in my own life have seen evil. I've done evil myself. I've been at the receiving end of evil. But you know what?

And I've had to hear and deal with questions about what happens to people who don't know about Jesus and all of that. And all I can tell you is, especially as I've read the book of Revelation and as I study the book of Romans and the longer that I'm a Christian, all I can tell you, and as I start, as I have, as increasingly, but not as fast as I wish it was, as I'm gripped by the gospel, I have just had an ever deeper confidence and sense that while I can't explain why things happen and what the meaning of events are, and that's because I'm not God, I just have had an increasing sense that the Bible is true, that the gospel is the true way to understand the Bible, and at the end of all things, whatever ends up happening and however things will all work out, that at the end of the day, the true God that truly does exist, the living God who does exist,

I will see and you will see that he has always acted with justice and truth and mercy and goodness, that I will have no complaint nor will you, and that no human being will have a valid complaint against God or any excuse, and I am not God and I don't know what's going on behind the scenes of things, but I've just had an increasing sense, an increasing confidence that this is true.

Let me just give you a little tiny, tiny, tiny illustration of what that's like. I should have done it before I said those things. It's the problem of not always reading from a text when you preach. This past Wednesday night, a group of about nine or ten of us fed the poor, and we now, every second month, we'll be partnering with Jericho Road, and on Wednesday nights, a group of us will have the opportunity to go to their Wednesday evening thing where approximately 100 to 150 poor will come, and we get to feed them and spend time with them and to serve them, and that's going to be a regular part of our ministry.

[ 18 : 02 ] It's going to be every second month, and we just did it for the second time this past Wednesday night, and when I arrived there, the guy asked me, he said, the guy who organized this, you're a pastor, how about would you like to talk, you know, they always do a 10-minute or 15-minute little Bible presentation in the middle of the evening, and they said, you're a pastor, would you like to do this in 45 minutes, and the guy's at Pentecostal, like, you know, Anglicans, we think we have to pray a long time before we preach, but you know, Pentecostals, God love me, he says, you're a pastor, you should be able to get up and preach, and I said, sure, I'll do that, I'll do that, so I went back to get my Bible, which was in the van, and as I'm walking back, a street person whom I've talked to several times before, just at the corner up here, if I'm pointing the right way, at Daly, and King Edward, and he says, he stops me, he says, oh, you know, friend, I'm just trying to get an extra dollar or two together, I want to go to Subway to get a sandwich because I'm hungry, and I stop, and I look at him, and I say, friend, this is your lucky day,

I'm just one block away from where my church has brought loaves and loaves of sandwiches and soup and cookies, you can come with me, and you can have as much to eat as you want, and he mumbled and said, well, you know, maybe after I've gotten a few dollars because I need something to drink and get some cigarettes, maybe I'll come over to get some sandwiches, and I'm just saying all that because you see, if somebody from the outside was just looking at me and this guy, and he has his hand out and the person maybe knows that I'm a Christian, a follower of Jesus, and this guy has his hand out and he doesn't hear the conversation, all he does is see us and he sees me smiling and maybe he thinks I'm smiling at him, mocking him, and then he sees me walking away without putting any money in his pocket, maybe they'd say to them, look at those Christians, they don't care about the poor, they're all just full of pious talk, you know, blah, blah, woof, woof, yada, yada, but you know what, they didn't actually hear the conversation and see what went on, they didn't hear me say this is your lucky day, you can come over here and you can have sandwiches as much as you want, you can have soup and you can have homemade chocolate chip cookies, all they would have seen from a distance is that and I guess as I've been a Christian longer and longer and as I've come to know Jesus more and more and trust the word more and more,

I just have this deep sense that there's a lot of really terrible things that go on in the world and there's some really terrible things that have befallen you who are here in this room and there is some terrible things that you have maybe done who are here in this room and maybe some of us have an unrecognized anger against God and complaints against God and all I'm saying is that this

text is telling us that at the end of the end of the end of the end in the last days the Bible is teaching that when God reveals all all that has gone on and all that he's done and when even after death he continues to act and work that we will have this sure and certain knowledge that God is just and true and merciful and good that he has acted with justice and truth and mercy and goodness and not a single person who's ever lived will have a valid complaint or valid excuse and the saints will sing with all the angels hallelujah salvation and glory and power belong to our God for his judgments are true and just now some of us might say when we're listening to this you're going to get to the gruesome part

I know and I know you're going to talk about the lake of fire next week I'm going to give you a pass on that so you can talk about that next week but it does sound a little bit George as if you know worship God or he's going to punish you and that's actually a very very common actually there's many Christians at different times in history who've had that type of a sense that as long as I live a good life God won't punish me that Christianity is a type of religion about doing particular types of good works and if you don't do good works God will zap you and it's really as if it's a type of behavior modification policy of avoiding being zapped by God but Revelation 19 not only is a celebration of who God is is true and just and good and merciful and that there will come a time when every person will see and understand that he is good and true and just and merciful and there will be no excuse and no complaint but the Christian faith is so much more than that and now we come to two of the greatest images of salvation in the Bible and it starts at verse 3 once more they cried out

Revelation 19 verse 3 Hallelujah the smoke from her goes up forever and ever and the 24 elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who was seated on the throne saying Amen Hallelujah and from the throne came a voice saying Praise our God all you his servants you who fear him small and great then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder crying out Hallelujah for the Lord our God the Almighty reigns let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen bright and pure for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints the redeemed are the bride of Christ the redeemed are the bride of Christ it's this powerful corporate image at a worldly level some of us in this room are well off and some of us are poor some of us are smart some of us are dumb some are old some are young some are white some are other colors black

[ 24 : 36 ] Chinese Asian all over the world some of us are married some of us are single some of us vote conservative some of us vote liberal some of us vote NDP some of us have university education some of us are maybe high school dropouts whole range of things that define us in terms of Canadian culture and society but all of those things are completely and utterly relativized when we put our faith and trust in Jesus and there's this corporate image that the church and here when it's talking about the church it's also talking about the Christians who've gone before us it's talking about Augustine and Luther and Calvin it's talking about John of the cross it's talking about Eric Liddell it's talking about Hudson Taylor it's talking about you and me and the image is that at the end of the end of the end of the end those of us who are in

Jesus we are described as the bride of Christ who in a sense marries Jesus and the image it's a great corporate image of the church and it's this image of great intimacy and affection and compassion with no exit strategy see that's what a great marriage is in a great marriage there's great intimacy and affection and companionship and love and revealing of self and there's no exit strategy and this image of revealing and being revealed of intimacy of companionship that will go on for all eternity is described as happening to those who are in Jesus corporately as a body together not alone the redeemed are the bride of Christ to tell you the truth

I sometimes when I think about this image I get frightened I get it's a type of intimacy which is too much and I'm not saying I get frightened it's not a sign of my holiness it's a sign of my fleshiness all of us on one hand long and yearn for intimacy and on the other hand we have fears of intimacy and this Bible passage is providing this spectacular image of what our end is in Christ our destiny is in Christ some of us here this morning are living with regrets some of us here this morning in terms of the eyes of the world have been failures some of us here this morning are struggling with great problems the Bible here is not trying to deny or deride any of those things but the Bible here is trying to say that we can ask God to fan and to flame within us a deeper longing and yearning for this our true destiny it's not trying to call us to long and yearn for something that's purely

self-centered or just completely and utterly imaginary the Bible here is telling us that this is the real end and destiny of even the least human being who puts their faith and trust in Jesus even the image of the Lamb those of you who are a bit familiar with the Bible the way that John when he writes his gospel introduces

Jesus he introduces John the Baptist as the greatest of the prophets and why is John the Baptist the greatest of the prophets well one of the fundamental reasons is that if you read the books of Moses and if you read Isaiah and you read Jeremiah and you listen to David and there's in the midst of all of this passage of scripture there's these shards of light and shards and bits and pieces of images that point to Jesus and you read let's say a psalm and you pick out a word or a shard and you realize in the flow of all of this psalm that's just talking about all sorts of other things there's a tiny little bit of a window into a tiny little bit of an image of who Jesus is and what makes John the Baptist the greatest of the prophets is that one day he's walking along and he sees this man walking along over there and he sees the wind blowing in that man's hair and maybe there's some of the leftover lunch that that man has just eaten and you can see little bits of parsley and little bits of pita bread in his beard and he's walking along and John the Baptist turns to his disciples and said behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world right there standing right there that's him walking all the prophets for 1400 years which have given bits and pieces of images of Jesus and what God is going to do and John the Baptist is the one who can say that guy right there walking right in front of you right now behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world that's him right there you can't get greater than that can you we'll see in a moment that the Bible says that in a sense testifying to Jesus and pointing to Jesus that's the essence of all prophecy it means that you and I can be prophets like John the Baptist behold Jesus and so the same Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world the Bible points this picture of intimacy that he who has taken away our sin calls us to be his bride and it's a corporate image not alone but together not just in our day or our denomination but in all churches that are where there are true Christians for all time together the bride of Christ it's a powerful and a beautiful image and we can see now here the last few chapters of the book of Revelation one of the things that it's doing it's posing before us the question what do you long for and what do you fear this week I was at a sort of a gathering of a group of people and there were a wide range of ages at it and there was this one fellow who was talking about how he hadn't seen his financial advisor in a couple of years and he's not a guy that has a government pension he's a guy like maybe some of us that you know you have to save up enough money to retire and so for those of us who have to save up enough money to retire the question always is how much money do you need before you can retire and so this fellow said you know

[ 31 : 55 ] I hadn't seen his financial advisor in a little while and I saw him and it was sort of good news but he told me that I have enough because I haven't spent a year and a half ago I was going to run out of money at 89 and now he said because I haven't spent as much money and my investments have done really good I can live to 91 but he said the day after I turn 91 I'm broke I will have no money and he said I'm 78 that's only 13 years from now and I'm feeling pretty healthy so he asked us what he should do I told him he should take up smoking that would help shorten his life so he wouldn't have to worry about living past 91 but the Bible text is putting before us what do we fear do we fear God do we do we are we aware of his justice what do we fear do we fear do we fear not having money do we long for money do we fear getting old do we fear not being beautiful or not being young or not being smart or not being successful do we long and yearn for success and money and youth and what is it we long for and what is it that we fear and the Bible is setting before us the most profound and practical questions about the deepest part of what it means to be human and to set before us what actually should we be longing for and what actually should we be fearing and the text which we're going to look at in a couple of moments is what we should in fact that's what we should fear but before we get there before we get to the gruesome part the Bible sets before us what we should long for and the Bible sets before us that no one is born as part of the bride of Christ we need to be redeemed you see that's why it's so important for us to point to Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world because no one is born as part of the bride of Christ we are all born needing the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and as we put our faith and trust in Him we become the bride of Christ the other image is also a very very wonderful image and it's in verses 9 and 10 and the angel said to me write this blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb and he said to me these are the true words of God then I fell down at his feet to worship him but he said to me you must not do that

I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers and sisters who hold the testimony of Jesus worship God for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy one of the reasons why I said what's the book of Revelation all about the book of Revelation is about Jesus it's not about becoming a genius figuring out all the things that are going to happen in the last days it's not about figuring out what OPEC is or whether Russia is Gog and Magog it's not all about that although it might touch on those things that the book of Revelation is a book about Jesus what he's done what he's doing what he will do why?

because the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy and the book of Revelation is a book of prophecy it's all about Jesus but you notice at the beginning that wonderful second image verse 9 and the angel said to me write this blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb and he said to me these are the true words of God second image to long for that what is heaven?

heaven is an unending feast with Jesus and with God and with all the saints heaven is an unending feast with God and in this feast of God we cannot drink so much alcohol that we will get drunk or get liver poisoning and we cannot eat so much that our cholesterol level will kill us and we cannot eat so much that we still cannot run and run and run and run and run and run and run and run and every bite of this feast will be both the most satisfying bite and the most satisfying sip that you have ever had in your entire life and at the same time it will create within you a desire for more of an even greater filling and that next bite will be even greater than the one that you had before that next sip will be even greater than the one you had before and at the same time that it is greater than the one that you had just had it will create within you yet a deeper longing and yearning for the next bite and the next sip and you will have that bite and you will have that sip and you will say that is an even greater pleasure than what I had before and there will be a longing for an even greater one and the image of the feast is an image of an infinite longing and yearning that will just grow and grow and grow within us and that our future is to be so fed and so nurtured and so filled and being able to drink of God and of his pleasure and of his goodness that every sip is a greater sip than the one before and creates a greater longing and yearning which God himself fulfills and even the longing and the yearning itself is a pleasure and that is what ordinary people like you and me are invited to by Jesus go back and read the accounts of Jesus in the Lord's Supper and Jesus is providing a 20,000 feet in the sky view all of his disciples are they're puzzled about how he said he's going to be betrayed and Jesus knows that over the next few days they are not going to show up very well that they are going to leave him they are going to flee him they are going to hide they aren't going to believe any of the things he said to them they are going to believe that he completely and utterly died they are going to believe that he is a complete and utter failure they are going to abandon him they are going to deny him and that even when women tell him that he is risen from the dead they are not going to believe the women and Jesus gives them a 20,000 foot in the sky thing before it all happens and he says what has he said this is my body which is broken for you and he said this cup is the cup of my blood which is shed for you and then he says what does he say

I will not drink of this blood again this cup again until I drink it with you in my kingdom it is a pointing and a picture towards the messianic feast what is one of the things that you can do as you come to communion what is one of the things that you can pray for as you come to communion one of the things that you can pray as you come forward to communion is dear God please grow in me fan into flame within me a longing and yearning to be with you and to partake of that feast with you that will characterize my relationship with you for all eternity thank you for Jesus and his death upon the cross thank you that that is the means by which I when I receive what he has done for me and trust him as my savior that my destiny every lord's supper is an invitation for us to remember our destiny in Jesus that we will one day pillars of dust who yet bear the divine image who have been redeemed by

[ 39 : 48 ] Jesus and the holy spirit lives in us a pillar of dust who can be felled by the smallest microbe but our eternal destiny is to be filled with a with such pleasure and such longings and yearnings which are pleasure themselves all because of Jesus it's in this comment it's in this context that we can hear of the judgment it's the the great Babylon has been judged we'll talk more fully about this next week I'm just going to really read the text to you the text is providing before us a question what is it you fear and what is it you dread what is it you long for and yearn for are you really being wise are you being honest am I being honest about what I really long for and yearn for and what I fear and what I dread am I being honest do I realize the depth of my idolatry do I realize the depth of my anger just this week in a coffee shop over the last couple of months

I've started to become a little bit friendly with a guy who's a very very very devout atheist and he showed me something that he'd just read he'd just written and I read it and you know he walked away and then later on he came up to me and asked me what I thought about it and I read it and it's gosh is this man angry at God like he he says these things and all I can see is this guy is so angry and so angry at God I don't know how I could talk to him about it and so he asked me what I thought and I said well you wrote your heart and that actually seemed to really make him happy but that's my response actually that's the Holy Spirit doing that that's not George being smart enough the fact of the matter George is thinking this guy's so angry I don't know what on earth to say to him I mean that's one of the reasons why at the heart of evangelism is prayer because the fact of the matter is is that all of us struggle with a certain degree of anger against

God or indifference to God or contempt of God and for some of us it's not just something that's part of our lives in some small way some of us it consumes us and only the Holy Spirit can break something like that only our patience and our love and companionship and friendship but it's primarily the Holy Spirit doing that to pray for such people consumed with an anger against God in this text we've just been told that we are how blessed it is if you were invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb and that's the true word of God and now you see a different invitation that comes and God doesn't invite people to be angry at him he doesn't invite people to come and try to wage war against him he only invites us to the marriage supper of the Lamb that's all he invites us to he only invites us to be the bride of the Lamb that's what he invites us to but for the beast and for the false prophet and earlier they were the ones who helped to form Babylon organized in rebellion against God who organized people in anger and rebellion against God the invitation comes to the carrion birds the vultures to eat on the flesh of those who come in anger and rebellion against God because their doom is certain all I will do is read the text and then we will stand and then we will pray then I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse the one sitting on it is called faithful and true and in righteousness he judges and makes war his eyes are like a flame of fire and on his head are many diadems and he has a name written that no one knows but himself he is clothed in a robe dipped in blood and the name by which he is called is the word of God and the armies of heaven arrayed in fine linen white and pure were following him on white horses from his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the almighty and on his robe and on his thigh he has a name written king of kings and lord of lords then I saw an angel standing in the sun and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead come gather for the great supper of

God to eat the flesh of kings the flesh of captains the flesh of mighty men the flesh of horses and their riders and the flesh of all men both free and slave both small and great I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army and the beast was captured and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped its image these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur and the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse and all the birds were gorged with their flesh please stand let us bow our heads in prayer father you know better than we do what we long for and what we yearn for you know father how many of us are conscious of our struggles with longing and yearning for things that have some importance but not the type of ultimate importance that we put on them and you know how many of us father aren't even aware of how much we are controlled by longings and yearnings for success and success in the eyes of people we don't even like and how much we are controlled by things like money and and and and a sense of importance or fame or beauty or a or a house or just a word from a particular person father you know how much we are in fact controlled by longings and yearnings such as these and how much father we fear failure in these I these areas of what are really just idolatry and yet father at the same time you you know that you have created us to have a longing and yearning for you and we give you thanks and praise for Jesus that he is the lamb of

[ 47 : 11 ] God who takes away the sin of the world that he is the lamb of God who has taken away my sin and all who put their faith and trust in him in Jesus and so we ask father that your Holy Spirit would do a mighty work in us today that you would help us to recognize the things that we long for and yearn for that we should not long and yearn for the things that we fear that we should not fear and we ask father that you would fan into flame within us a longing and yearning for you a longing and yearning to know ourselves as the bride of Christ a longing and yearning to be with you in the feast the unending feast of heaven to which you have called us in Jesus father make us disciples

gripped by the gospel living for your glory and this we ask in Jesus's name your son and our savior  
amen you you you