

Ephesus and “That Lovin’ Feeling”

Revelation 2:1-7

#4 in our series The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation

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[The worship band sings “You Lost that Loving Feeling” by the Righteous Brothers.]

Prayer

Lord God, we ask that you would help us to preach, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Message

In January of 1978, I went on my first date with Susan Coleman, who is now Susan Hiatt. I think I remember almost everything about that date: the way she smelled, how her hair sat on her shoulders. I took her to see *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. It was sold out, so we went next door and saw another movie—an awful movie. So I said, “Would you like to see the late show of *Close Encounters*?” And she said, “Yes!” During the first movie, I had managed to get my arm around Susan’s shoulder. I was so thrilled with that close encounter that I jumped at an opportunity for another close encounter.

So, during *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, I put my arm around her again. About halfway through the movie, she said, “Do you need to move your arm?” I said, “No, it’s just fine.” There was no way I was moving my arm. But it wasn’t fine. It was screaming with pain; it felt like knives were being jammed into my arms, but there was no way that I was gonna move it. And then, I discovered . . . that I could not move it. It was utterly paralyzed from my neck all the way to my fingertips—just dead meat sitting on her beautiful shoulders. At last, I had to excuse myself, reach around her head, pick my arm up, set it on my lap, and slap it until the blood began to flow once again.

On our second date (it’s amazing I got a second date) I worked like crazy. I prepared a picnic. I cleaned the car. I took her up to a horse pasture in the mountains where we kept our horse. But we couldn’t catch the horse. So we picnicked on a rock under a pine tree, and we talked about death. My friend Bobby had died that week in a car accident. We talked and talked, and talked . . . I was absolutely stricken with her.

On our third date, I arranged a snowshoeing trip. My mom helped me prepare a picnic. On the way up to Frisco, at the top of Loveland Pass, we parked the car and hiked to the top of a 13,000-foot mountain in our tennis shoes in mid-winter. I remember looking at her and thinking, “Wow! What a woman!”

I now know that I was being conned. That was the last mountain Susan ever climbed—she hates mountain climbing. I was being conned. But, it was a *beautiful* con, for she did it because she wanted to be with *me*. She disciplined herself in the hope of being with me.

We snow-shoed to my Uncle Chuck's cabin in the woods, where we had a picnic in the tree house that I played in as a little boy. I would never do that, on my own, but I wanted to be with her . . . And I figured that it was the kind of thing she might float her boat. And I was right! It did. It was euphoric.

Adults often look down on that "first love" and discount it and call it puppy love. We probably discount it, 'cause it hurts too much to remember it, and we despair of ever feelin' it again.

On our fourth date, we went to the Sade Hawkin's dance. In a James Bond-like, romance-induced fog, I drove my dad's car out of the parking lot, over a median on South Broadway. I acted like I meant to do it, but I didn't. I bent the frame; it was *bad*. And she still liked me!

By our fifth date, I was feeling fairly confident and figured that I had this thing under control . . . So, we just went to a movie.

And on the sixth date, we went to a movie . . .

On the seventh date, we went to a movie . . .

On the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth . . . we went to a movie.

It was long about then that I said, "You know, maybe we ought to date other people too."

An anonymous author wrote this:

Their wedding picture mocked them from the table, these two whose minds no longer touched each other.

Somewhere, between the oldest child's first tooth and the youngest daughter's graduation, they lost each other.

Throughout the years each slowly unraveled that tangled ball of string called self, [but] as they tugged at stubborn knots, each hid his or her searching from the other.

Sometimes she cried at night and begged the whispering darkness to tell her who she was. He lay beside her, snoring like a hibernating bear, unaware of her winter.

Once, after they had made love, he wanted to tell her how afraid he was of dying, but, fearful to show his naked soul, he spoke instead of the beauty of her [body].

She took a course on modern art, trying to find herself in colors splashed upon a canvas, complaining to the other women about men who are insensitive.

He climbed into a tomb called "The Office," wrapped his mind in a shroud of paper figures, and buried himself in customers.

Slowly, the wall between them rose, cemented by the mortar of indifference.

One day, reaching out to touch each other, they found a barrier they could not penetrate, and recoiling from the coldness of the stone, each retreated from the stranger on the other side. [then he writes]

For when love dies, it is not in a moment of angry battle, not when fiery bodies lose their heat. It lies panting, exhausted expiring at the bottom of a wall it could not scale.

They lost hope.

No longer lovers—at best, roommates—each trapped in a prison of resentment and failure that we call the "self"—the illusion of our own sovereignty.

Last week, we noted that Jesus is waking us up from the dream of our own sovereignty—our own illusion of control.

*“Awake o sleeper and rise from the dead,” writes Saint Paul,
“and Christ will shine on you.”*

Revelation (*apokalypsis*) 2:1 “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands...’”

That’s quite a picture.

Jesus just revealed that the seven lampstands *are* the seven churches and the seven stars in His right hand are the seven *angels* of the seven *churches*...

So, Jesus, the Starman is talking to the seven stars in His right hand as He walks among the churches that are in fact lampstands... and lampstands hold lamps like the seven lamps of fire on the seven lampstands that became one (like a menorah) before the throne of God in Revelation chapter four. The seven lamps of fire are the “seven spirits of God,” which are the “seven eyes of the lamb” (Revelation 5:6).

Seven lamps burned in the Holy Place in the tabernacle or temple. They were to shine light on the bread of the presence the altar of incense and on the veil that covered the throne of God (on top of the ark)—and the One who abides on that throne. And now, to make things even weirder, it turns out that we are Christ’s Temple, which is His Body and Bride.

Now, He goes walking among the lampstands, just as He walked in the garden, calling to the man and the woman saying, “Where are you?” He wanted to be with them, but they were hiding behind a veil...

katakalypto—they were veiled.

apokalypto—means to unveil, to reveal.

Revelation (*apokalypsis*) 2:1-7a

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. ‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches...’”

So Jesus, the Starman, talks to this star angel, which means “messenger.” Men are referred to as angels and in the Old Testament, so is God and His Word. Jesus talks to the star angel in His hand and then says, *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God”* (Rev. 2:7b).

Eden means “pleasure” or “delight.”

Paradise is a Persian word that literally means “garden of pleasure or delight.”

Adam and Eve were *katakalypto*—veiled to that pleasure when they took the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil from the tree in the middle of the garden. [Peter turns around and points to the cross.]

And then they veiled themselves with fig leaves...

And then God veiled the Way to the tree of Life in the middle of the garden...

And then He veiled the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that would rest on top of the ark between the cherubim. Israel was commanded to worship in front of that veil, before the bread of the presence, under the seven golden lampstands.

But now, to “the one who conquers,” the Way to the Life that hangs on the tree of Life in the midst of the garden... is unveiled—as if the veil ripped, from top to bottom.

Now, I’m sorry to talk this way, because it makes us uncomfortable, but The Revelation ends with a marriage feast. And a Jewish marriage feast was all about two unveiled people celebrating a communion of delight in a covenant of body and blood that would then produce fruit—that is, more life.

Jesus is the Groom and His Church is the Bride. And Love, Joy, Peace, Patience Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faith, and self-controlled by Love are the fruit of this communion.

Isaiah 62:5 *“...as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.”*

But now Jesus mourns, as He walks among the lampstands saying, *“You have abandoned the Love you had at first.”*

Isn’t that incredible?

This is the first order of business with His church, for Jesus, this is the foundational issue.

He says something like, “You’re a dutiful spouse. You take care of our home. You faithfully nurture our kids teaching them what’s true. You care for it all, but I wonder if you care for me. I want you so deeply, and it seems, you don’t want me anymore.”

Do you sense how painful and how humiliating it must have been for our Lord to author this Word, this letter? What's He saying? [Peter begins singing part of the song "You Lost that Loving Feeling."

Baby, baby, I'd get down on my knees for you
If you would only love me like you used to do, yeah...

You lost that lovin' feelin'
Whoa, that lovin' feelin'
You lost that lovin' feelin'
Now it's gone, gone, gone, whoa, woe, woe...

As I mentioned, I'm sorry to talk this way because it's very painful for some. And I'm sorry to talk this way because I haven't always been sensitive to that pain in the past.

Well, it was about forty years before Ephesus received the Revelation from Jesus that they received another letter from Paul. It was in the letter to the Ephesians that Paul wrote,

"Awake o Sleeper and rise from the dead and Christ will give you light."

And then he wrote,

"... We are members of [Christ's] body. 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church."

—Eph. 5:14, 30-31

He's pointing out that God made the Adam—*ha adam*—male and female, and told them to commune in the garden of delight, for it was to reference the communion that Christ desires with us, His bride, in the eternal covenant of His Love.

So you see, it makes complete sense that the evil one would do all he can to mar our conception of the substance—the reference, so we would miss the substance, which is Christ.

In the 21st century, we have all sorts of debates about how exactly satan does that, just as they had all sorts of debates about how he did that in the 1st century. But the point is that each of us was made for intimate communion in a covenant of delight. We all long for that communion and, at times, we all despair of ever finding it or experiencing it. But we are each made for it, and so all your longings and satisfactions—the good ones and the bad ones, the wounds and the delights—all tell us something about Jesus and His Love. They are a physical reference to a spiritual reality.

We each have a physical body but are destined to receive a spiritual body. The spiritual is not less real than the physical, but more real. And the spiritual is not about less intimate communion, but more.

Your physical body only feels its own pleasures and pain.
It's the kingdom of your own sovereignty.

But even now your spirit *can* feel the pain and pleasure of those you love.

Sexuality is so powerful, for it's a physical communion beyond the boundaries of your own self-centered kingdom of control—a communion that is somehow life and creates life—like Paul writes the two become one flesh. So, for a moment one feels another's delight. It's a communion of delight, as two self-centered autonomous physical bodies are unveiled, surrender their sovereignty, and become one.

And yet... it's a reference.

So, you have a physical body that can become one with another body in a communion of delight in the Covenant of Love. But you will receive a spiritual body that will be part of one great body, and even now becomes one spirit with Christ. We can barely even begin to imagine the ecstatic joy of that reality that is your destiny and my destiny, but God has created in our very flesh . . . a reference.

Please don't get hung up on the reference, but please learn from the reference.

You will lose the reference and gain the reality.

Don't get hung up, but please see how satan tries to hang you up.

The problem with sexuality is that it works. Two bodies really become one flesh—that's called marriage. It's a covenant. Satan tempts us to break that covenant, for when we do we break a living body. Then, in our pain, we renounce the intimate communion that we all long for. We do that by shutting down our hearts and retreating into our own self-centered kingdoms of control.

Sometimes people become promiscuous—trying to divorce the physical communion from the spiritual, which ultimately destroys both. And then sometimes those very same people discover religion and think it means giving up hope in any form of intimate communion at all. They think Christianity is all about gaining control, when in fact it's all about surrendering our illusion of control to the Great Bridegroom.

The Great Bridegroom longs to take delight in His Bride. But He *will not* take delight unless she surrenders to delight because *His* delight is *her* delight. And *her* delight is *His* delight. It's a communion of delight; it's ecstasy. Satan hates ecstasy, and so he will tempt us to immorality, which is broken communion.

He will tempt us to immorality and then morality—and by that, I mean faith in the law.

He'll whisper into your soul, "Since your heart was raped, never surrender it again. Guard your naked heart. Guard it. . . with law . . . keep it prim and proper. Maintain absolute control over the sovereign, little kingdom of your soul. And this is what Jesus is for... He came to guard the borders of your kingdom so that, locked away inside your sovereign little kingdom of absolute control, you might never be hurt again. And above all do not surrender your shame. Never let anyone touch it, most of all Jesus, for He is

good and would only despise your evil. Keep your shame safe, behind the veil—*katakalypto*.”

Now you may never have been physically promiscuous, and yet we’ve all been spiritually promiscuous. We’ve all trusted the lies of the ancient serpent, broken the heart of God, covered our shame, veiled our souls, and hidden in the trees; we’ve hidden in the illusion of our own sovereignty—the dream that we need no one’s help but our own.

In C.S. Lewis’ novel, *That Hideous Strength*, the director counsels a young woman struggling in her new marriage. At one point he says this:

“There is no escape. If it were a virginal rejection of the male, [God] would allow it. Such souls can bypass the male and go on to meet something...higher up, to which they must make a yet deeper surrender. But your trouble has been what old poets called, Daungler. We call it pride. You are offended by the masculine itself: the loud, irruptive, possessive thing the gold lion the bearded bull – which breaks through hedges and scatters the little kingdom of your primness...The male you could have escaped, for it exists only on the biological level. But the masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it. You had better agree with your adversary quickly.” “You mean I shall have to become a Christian?” said Jane. “It looks like it,” said the Director . . .

The Church doesn’t talk very much about this today—I think: *we are* the Bride of Christ, betrothed to Jesus the Christ. Why?

So that He would provide a house with a two car garage and a nice kitchen?

So that He would guard your prim and proper little kingdom?

Is that why?

He did not hang on a cross and bear the pain of Hell so you would be regular in your devotions, go on one mission project a year, and be a faithful tither. He suffered, died, and bore Hell in order to win your heart.

So that you would surrender your sovereignty to His sovereignty;

So that you would surrender to a communion of delight in His Covenant of Love.

But Satan has made you fear the deepest longings of your own soul so that you would spurn the Lord’s advances and turn Him into a roommate—or even better, a border guard.

Jesus writes, *“I see your works. I see your faithful endurance. I see your orthodoxy... thank you! And you hate the works of the Nicolaitans. I hate their works too.”*

We don’t know, but the Nicolaitans may have been a group that taught Christians to be sexually promiscuous (as we read about in Pergamum later in this chapter in verse 5).

Well, Jesus is saying,

“Thank you, Ephesus. Thank you for hating immorality.

Thank you for hating passion out of bounds. . .

But, my dear, you have come to hate passion in bounds!

*You cook, you clean, you take care of the children, and I'm absolutely convinced
you'd never give your passion to another. . .*

*But what's the point? You no longer give it to Me.
You have abandoned the love we had at first."*

We can philosophize and theologize about the meaning of Love, but if you've ever been in a relationship (the pain, the joy, the sorrow, the struggle) you *know* what Jesus means.

You never close your eyes anymore when I kiss your lips
And there's no tenderness like before in your fingertips

You're trying hard not to show it.
But baby, baby I know it—
You've lost that lovin' feelin'...

We may say, "Well I can't control my feelings...."
But that's not entirely true, is it?

I've been married to Susan for thirty-four-and-a-half years. And we've been hangin' out together for forty. And let me tell you, we've had to fight for that "lovin' feeling"—not at first, but ever since that sixth or seventh date. And I hope you know that I'm talking about far more than sexual attraction. I'm talking about intimacy, physical and, even more, *spiritual* communion. It's been a fight for passion. And it has cost me energy, and mostly pride. At times, I've had to get down on my knees, cry out to God and even beg Susan.

One time twenty-five years ago was particularly hard. She was nursing our fourth child . . . and raising our children largely on her own because I was constantly busy at church or in my office. But after the kids were in bed, I was desperate for her affections. I mean *any* affection . . . a hug . . . a kiss . . . a smile . . .

She would say things like, "Well, I just don't express my self that way."

And I would think, "You used to express yourself that way."

She would say, "I cook, I clean, I take care of the children . . .
That's how I say, I love you."

But I knew the truth: she was growing tired of the fight—fighting for passion. And it *was* a fight for her, because, I can be very critical, self-centered, strong and demanding . . . not easy to love.

Well, during that time, I would stay awake all night sometimes, angry, and frustrated, not knowing what to do with my feelings. She might *agree* to do what I wanted her to do, but she wouldn't *feel* what I wanted her to feel; her heart would be far from me. I couldn't demand delight. And her delight is my delight, and that's what I wanted—a communion of delight.

To tell her how I felt was utterly humiliating. . .

"Susan, even though you don't long for me, I still long for you. I sit awake all night; I watch you while you're sleeping, just wishing, hoping, and praying that you would wake up and receive my love. Let my love shine on you."

During that time, there were nights I remember thinking to myself: "Peter, just give up. Just give up. Give up on being lovers, and just settle on being roommates."

Late one night, when I was no longer strong but felt profoundly weak, I wrote my wife a letter. In that letter, I just shared my broken heart . . . That was the night I decided to love Susan more than my ego. It was the death of my ego—"It's not easy to say, "I want you more than anything in this world, and I want you to want me... and I don't think you do. . . anymore."

Do you know that Jesus loves you more than His ego?

I don't know if he ever had an ego, but if he did have an ego, I'm sure we nailed it to a tree in the middle of a garden. He most certainly had a body, and it was broken for you, The life spilled out for you...

And the Spirit was delivered up for you...

You realize that Jesus is the Word of God, that is God, that has all power and dominion. And now He sends this letter to His sleeping Bride.

"I have this against you..."

That sounds so demanding, but listen to what He has against them:

"I don't think you like me... anymore."

What does God Almighty want from you?

I think He wants you to like Him, the way He likes you . . .

Freely, passionately, relentlessly and absolutely . . .

I wrote Susan a letter, and several times she's reminded me of that letter because the letter gave her hope. It was a new beginning for us. We began to do some of the things we did at first. And then, began to feel some of the things we felt at first...

According to some scholars, the name Ephesus means "Desired one."

"My desired one, remember what we had?"

Repent and do the things you did at first."

So, Bride of Christ, what were the things you did at first?

Maybe the Lord is saying something like this to you:

"Remember those hikes we used to take? And *you* probably didn't even think of them as anything remotely religious, but remember those hikes? You thought of *me* the whole time! Would you go hiking again?"

"Remember how you used to stay up late and *read* your Bible?

You *memorized* parts of it. Would you do that again?"

"Remember how you sang songs to me. Would you sing to me like you used to sing to me?"

"Remember how every week you couldn't wait to come to worship, hear about me, talk about me, listen for me, and commune with me?"

I'm always cautious about pushing worship attendance because I have ulterior motives, but that was something we did at first; every week we disciplined ourselves to go on a date. The discipline didn't really feel like discipline, but that's what it was.

You're with Jesus all the time, but once a week, go on a date.

Discipline yourself in *hope*.

- If you discipline yourself in *fear* and *shame* you'll end up hating Jesus.
- But if you discipline yourself in *the hope of loving Jesus*... you're already loving Jesus and are bound to feel more Love for Jesus.

"Ephesus, Ephesus, do the things you did at first."

Wouldn't you like to know the things they did at first? People always want me to tell them what to do; I'm entirely serious about that. That has really surprised me as a pastor. People ask me, what I always ask Jesus, in a host different ways: "Jesus just what is it that we have to do?"

So, wouldn't you like to know the things they did at first? Because He says, *"Do the things that you did at first."* We really don't know, exactly, what they did at first . . . and maybe that's good. For if we did, we'd probably start a denomination called *The True Fellowship of the Things They Did At First*... (incorporated)

Actually, we do have an idea of some of the things they did at first. You can read about them in Acts chapter 19. And folks have actually started denominations based on what they did at first.

In Acts 19 we read about . . .

- Twelve Ephesians that were baptized in the Spirit and spoke in tongues—and people have started denominations where you have to do just that.
- Then Paul argues with Jews—and there are several denominations all about doing just that.
- Then Paul reasoned daily for two years in the Hall of Tyrannous—and all sorts of denominations are all about that—and judge others for not doing that.
- Then twelve sons of the high priest try to cast out a demon, doing just what Paul did at first—and the demon literally strips them naked and beats them up, saying *"Jesus I know and Paul I know about, but who are you?"*

The demon didn't care about *what* they did, but *who* they knew...And isn't that the point? Paul had a relationship with Jesus...At first, the Ephesians had a relationship with Jesus. You can read about it in Acts 19: It was confusing, messy, and took a lot of work because that's how relationships are. But they did what they did because they had met Jesus, fallen in love with Jesus, and wanted to *know* Jesus; they had a relationship.

At one point, (Acts 19:23) church even turned into a riot in the theater in Ephesus . . . But now, forty years later, they had everything under control: right doctrine, right practice, right discipline . . . and cold hearts.

Did you notice that my passion for Susan in High School grew cold when all I did was the very thing I did at first? I took her to movies.

I remember everything about our first date to *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. But I don't remember anything about dates number six through fifty—when I thought our relationship was under control and so all I had to do was just do what I did at first...

And yet . . . it wasn't what I did at first, was it?

If I do the things I did at first, *because* someone told me that I have to do the things I did at first, *then* I'm not doing the things I did at first. No one had to tell me at first! I saw Susan and just did what I did at first. And, at first, I did anything and everything that I thought might get me closer to Susan.

- I worked hard on our relationship . . . in hope!
- I disciplined myself . . . in hope!
- And I didn't even think of it as discipline; what I didn't want to do, I did want to do, because I thought it might get me closer to Susan. It was hope.

So, if you have any hope in Jesus work on your relationship.

- Go for a walk and talk to Him like you used to.
- Stay up late reading your Bible.
- Sing louder.
- Don't miss worship services.
- Seek Jesus with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength—and then it doesn't much matter what you *do*, but that you *care* to do it!
- You know? Susan really didn't care about the movie, or trying to catch the horse, or climbing a mountain or wrecking my Dad's car—she cared, that I cared so very much for her.

So, if you have any hope in Jesus . . . work on your relationship with Jesus.

But what do we do if a person has no hope?

What do you say to a Bride who's lost hope?

"Susan you are a disciplined wife.

But I have this against you: you don't like me.

Therefore you must go with me to *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

Then you must try to catch a horse, have a picnic instead, and talk about death.

Then you must climb a 13,000 ft. mountain in February.

Then you must distract me with your beauty, such that I bend the frame on my father's car...

OR I will 'remove your lampstand.'

Like me as much as I like you or I'll come and 'remove your lampstand'!"

How do you say that to a person? Well, Jesus is not saying that to a person. (That's what's so fascinating here.) People are overhearing Jesus say this . . . to a star, in His

strong right hand. The Light of the world is talking to a light in His hand as He walks among lampstands.

The Starman is talking to a star, that is an *angelos* (that's where we get our word "angel")—but *angelos* means messenger. That messenger is sent to each church. So, Jesus delivers the message to the messenger and, then, Jesus says, "*Let him who has ears to hear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*" The message to the messenger, is imparted to us by the Spirit, who in two chapters is called a lamp (*lampas*—torch, Rev. 4:5), who must then be the lamp in our lampstand.

The seven angels must somehow be the seven spirits of God (Rev. 4:5) sent out into all the earth, which means we're overhearing a conversation between God the Son and God the Spirit about each and all of us—His Church, His Body, His Temple, His Bride—His Lampstand.

We overhear Jesus talking to His own Spirit, about His *relationship* with us: His hurts and sorrows, His hopes and dreams, His choice that must become our choice if we are to conquer. We overhear Jesus talking to the stars, which are flames of fire, which are *lampas*—lamps. See? I think Jesus is fixin' to put the lamps in the lampstands.

So . . . As we've preached, as you've heard the Word, did you feel any hope at any point? I know you probably felt pain, but at any point did you feel a little bit of hope? The hope might have felt weak, perhaps broken and inconsequential . . . but hope . . .

In Colossians 1, Paul talks about the mystery hidden for ages and generation... He says it is this: "*Christ in us, the hope of glory.*"

You see? *Hope* in you, is *Christ* in you.

When I wrote Susan that letter, the thing that gave her hope was not suggestions for activities that we could do. It was the revelation that my heart was broken for her. And when she saw my heart, it changed everything she did. What if you actually saw God's heart broken for you?

Well, the Church is to overhear a conversation that Jesus has with Himself. And then she is to read aloud and hear the vision that Jesus is sending. In the vision, they see a slaughtered lamb. The Jews had been slaughtering lambs in the temple for a thousand years. Now they see that the Lion of Judah is the Slaughtered Lamb standing on the throne—that had been covered behind the veil.

The Slaughtered Lamb conquers the kings of the earth, the beasts, the great harlot and the ancient dragon. All in preparation for us—to be married to us—His Bride. His Bride is a city and she has no need of the sun, for the Lamb is her lamp (*lampas*)...The lamb is her Lamp (Rev. 21:23), and she is His lampstand.

He conquers, and she conquers with Him (Rev. 17:4). Their relationship, their communion, conquers all things. Right now, it may seem so very weak—like a broken heart or a slaughtered lamb. But *hope* in you is *Christ* in you. Be with Him, think about Him, talk to Him, keep nothing from Him, delight in Him as He delights in you, and that's what it is to conquer sin, death, hell, the Father of lies and this entire whole cursed world.

Communion

So, He took the bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you. And He took the cup saying, "This is the covenant in my blood. Drink of it all of you."

Do you see what He's saying? "*Baby Baby, I climbed up on this tree for you...* [Peter reaches out and holds onto the cross as he continues singing] *if you would only love me, the way that I love you.*"

"Let him who has ears to hear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

[Several worship songs are sung]

Benediction

As we were singing, I was thinking about this day back in the early eighties. Susan and I drove up on Vail pass. It was just beautiful that day. I remember at one point looking at Susan and thinking to myself, "*I can die now God; she loves me. Thank you! From here on out nothing matters. I can die now because I just experienced this. God, this world has lost its power over me.*" And then, of course, we drove down the mountain, had a bunch of fights, got jobs, had four kids, got old...but it was a reference because God was also speaking to me through the reference, and through the sunrise, through the flowers, and through the mountains. He was saying, "Peter, I love you."

If I could ever get a really good glimpse of that, if I could see that the Creator loves me in such a relentless and furious way, this world would lose its power over me, wouldn't it? Your opinions of me would lose its power over me. My suffering and sorrow would lose its power over me. I would, in effect, conquer the world because of this Love that I know deep, deep down in my heart. Jesus said, "*In this world, you will have tribulation but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" "*I have overcome the world,*" and when you are *with* Him, *you* have overcome the world too. And get this: the evil one knows that. He's not afraid of your religious rituals, but He is afraid of the faith, hope, and love you have in your heart for Jesus. To you it seems small, inconsequential, like a little seed — weak and powerless. But the evil one knows it's the Life that flows from the throne and nothing is more powerful.

So, in Jesus' name, believe the Gospel.
And work on your relationship. Amen.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.