

## **Crown Casting, Revelation 4**

Revelation 4

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#11 in our series “The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation”

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### **Prayer**

Lord God, I pray that you would help us now to preach, in Jesus’ name.

### **Message**

Sometimes people say my messages are hard to understand.

Sometimes I worry that I’m just saying the same thing over and over again . . . and I think maybe I am and I’m supposed to. What I think I’m supposed to say is summed up marvelously in a little book that I think we can all understand. I read it to you six years ago and I’d like to read it again.

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It’s titled, *The Pirate Who Tried to Capture the Moon*.

[by Dennis Haseley, illustrations by Sue Truesdell]

[Some pages will be skipped, but most of it will be read.]

There was once a fierce pirate who loved nothing.

He lived alone on an island, where he strode about in armor, waving a broad sword. And he watched for ships to capture.

Through his glass, he spied the ship of flowers, with its daffodil flag and its sails of Queen Anne’s lace.

(And the pirate captured just about every ship you could think of. He captured the ship of flowers, ship of horses and ship of birds)..

But each time he’d look up in the sky and see the moon sailing as it pleased. He’d shake his sword and yell, “Some day I’ll capture you too!” (And the day finally came)..

The pirate knew it was time to capture the moon.

He climbed up his mast and waved his sword above his head, shouting, “Moon. Follow me!” Moonlight shone on his armor. But the moon drifted free.

So the pirate shot at the moon. The dark barrels of his cannons swiveled high— Boom boom boom—but the cannonballs fell straight back down and slid into the sea with hardly a splash.

And still the moon sailed across the sky..

The pirate paced back and forth in his rusty armor, back and forth, to and fro. He walked in circles, day and night, until he passed an old ship of books he had captured long ago.

He searched its broken decks and shredded sails until he found a book that told all about the moon. Then the pirate laughed.

He took that book and six horses and sailed for land. He harnessed the mares to his ship, and he ripped across the earth—he ripped over fields and streams, leaving a scar. Slowly, the pirate who loved nothing moved over the land in his ship, looking for everything the moon loved.

*The moon loves to shine through curtains, said the book. It loves to float in pools of water. It likes to peek over small hills. The moon loves poetry.*

The pirate slashed curtains from farmhouses and drapes from mansions.

He cut curtains from stages and he loaded them all onto his ship.

Into barrels he scooped frog ponds and reflecting pools and swimming holes.

He chopped at small hills with his sword and shoveled them into his hold.

He captured poets and everything else he knew the moon loved.

He swiped candles from the tables of Italian restaurants.

He grabbed sadly playing violins from under the chins of gypsies.

He kidnaped lovers as they gazed at each other softly, walking hand in hand. He netted baying wolves, and children who danced all by themselves in the middle of the night.

And the pirate sailed that bursting ship back to his island. And he waited. Clouds moved across the sky. The wind blew the empty sea.

And finally the moon rose.

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We'll stop there for now . . .

I hope you realize the pirate was a lunatic.

Lunatic: derived from the latin *luna*, which means moon.

He was moonstruck—driven crazy by the glory of the moon.

Psalm 89:36-37 refers to the throne of the seed of David as the moon and it refers to the moon as the “faithful witness.”

The moon faithfully reflects the light of the sun upon the dark side of the earth.

In Revelation 1:5 Jesus is called “the faithful witness.”

Then John sees Him shining like the sun . . . and falls at His feet as though dead—until Jesus touches him and says “fear not.”

And then Jesus dictates seven letters . . .

*Now Revelation 4:1: After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”*

“After this.” . . . After *what?* After the letters to the seven churches, which aren’t *actually* to the seven churches, but to the seven *angelos* (messengers) of the seven churches.

“After this...”

It’s important to note, that here in chapter four we are first beginning to read what Jesus in chapter one said is actually addressed to the seven churches.

In 1:11 John heard, “*Write what you see . . . and send it to the seven churches.*”

But for the last two chapters, John has been dictating what he has heard, which isn’t addressed to the churches but the seven angels of the seven churches, which appear to be the seven Spirits of God in the seven churches.

And yet, the seven churches are clearly expected to overhear what is said to the Spirit about themselves—the seven churches. They overhear that they each face some real challenges . . . and some incredible rewards, *if* they conquer.

1. Some need to restore their first love.
2. Some are to be faithful unto death.
3. Some must stand against false doctrine and idolatry.
4. Some need to renounce *porneia*—buying and selling Love.
5. Some are dead and need to wake up.
6. Some need to endure the syangogue of satan—Jews that aren’t really Jews.
7. Some think they’ve prospered and need nothing, when they’re actually trapped in Hell and need to open the door to Jesus.

All of them *need* to conquer. All of them have tremendous problems.

All of them must be very self-conscious “after this.”

And now, let’s have a little sympathy for John. John sees himself as their pastor.

What is he supposed to do or say, “after this?” ...after the revelation of all this need?

There is a huge variety of need in this room right now. Some of you are facing challenges that I can barely begin to understand. If I were in your place I think I would be utterly crushed. You're facing them with wisdom and grace . . . and I'm supposed to preach to you . . . about God, who continually baffles me because He's holy. Holy means set apart, different, awesomely strange. What do I say "after this"?

Well, the seven churches faced all sorts of problems and one common problem. It's very likely reflected in references to the teachings of the Nicolaitans, Balaam, and the Jezebel woman. It manifests in their apathy, immorality, and self-delusions.

After the seduction of Jewish legalism, historians view this to be the first great doctrinal enemy of the early church. I'm talking about Gnosticism. Gnostic means literally "one who knows." It refers to all sorts of groups and so isn't always a helpful term. But it usually refers to a corrupt melding of Christian theology with the philosophies of Greece... but Greece is not the problem. The problem with Gnosticism is this underlying assumption that you're saved by *gnosis*—that's Greek for knowledge.

Eugene Peterson writes:

*The Gnostics gossiped about God. They claimed to know a lot about God (Gnostic means "one who knows"), but it was all about God. Gnostics did not pray. They did not worship.*

All seven churches existed in a sea of Gnosticism. And we modern Americans exist in a similar sort of sea—a sea of ideas that took our culture by storm in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Enlightenment was largely a rediscovery of Greek ideas.

To the Greeks, a man's crown was his ability to use reason to conquer all things.

To use reason is not the same thing as being reasonable.

Scripture says that Jesus is the Reason, the Logic, the *Logos*, the Word. And He must conquer us, if we are to be reasonable.

Many would argue that the modern era began in 1636 when Rene Descartes said, "*Cogito ergo sum*," – "I think, therefore I am."

Scripture testifies that, "*I am*" is, *therefore* we think.

But DesCarte argued "I think, therefore I am." It means something like, "Man is the measure of all things." ...including Reason, which is unresonable, if you really think about it.

"Man is the measure of all things."

Or as it's stated on my daughter's T-shirt, "It's all about me."

I just glossed over 3,000 years of philosophy and history and put it on my daughter's T-shirt. But, I think it's safe to say that the Gnostics and most modern people are pretty

much like the pirate who tried to capture the moon . . . saying something like . . .

“If you want to know the moon, don’t trust poets and lovers...”

“If you want to know the moon, you must conquer the moon.”

“Send a man to the moon, capture a piece of the moon, and bring it back and put it in a box.”

“To know a tree, cut it down and count its rings.”

“To know a frog, capture it, kill it, and cut it into tiny pieces.”

“To know a woman . . .”

Well . . . cutting her into pieces is illegal, but in some places, they can be purchased—that’s called *porneia*.

And now, I really should point out that if Gnosticism is faith in knowledge, then it’s far more than ancient Greeks and modernists that are Gnostic. And it wasn’t just the second great threat to the early church, it was also the first; it’s the philosophy of the “Synagogue of Satan.” I’m saying that all Phairsees (all legalists) are Gnostic.

Gnostics have faith in knowledge that they take from the natural world.  
Pharisees have faith in knowledge that they take from Scripture.

In John’s gospel, Jesus says to the Jews, “*You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have life, and it is they that bear witness to me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life*” (John 5:39).

Remember the pirate who tried to capture the moon? He found a book about the moon and learned everything the moon liked. Then he captured all those things to get to the moon.

The Bible is a book about God. Maybe we read it to find out all the things that God likes: honoring the Sabbath, not using His name in vain, not murdering, permanent marriages . . . We learn everything God likes and try to capture those things in order to capture God.

In the Old Testament, God’s chief complaint to the Jews was that they played the whore. That’s *porneia*. They wanted to know *about* God, so they could *use* God, but didn’t want to *be known* by God and so surrender to God. They wanted an idol—a small controllable inanimate god—but not the living God.

“*You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have life, and it is they that bear witness to me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.*” They wanted words *about* God, but not the *living* Word that *is* God. So, when He stood in front of them, they plotted to capture Him, kill Him, and cut Him into little pieces of broken flesh and drops of blood.

I’m just saying that the Pharisees were Gnostics.

And the Gnostics were Pharisees.

And liberal New Ager’s are just like most religious conservatives.

And most Christian fundamentalists are just like most secular scientists.

I'm saying Gnosticism is the human condition. As if we all thought we could make ourselves in the image of God, by taking knowledge from some tree. So, like those Jews and Greeks in the seven churches, we modern people expect something "after this." After all our problems have been pointed out, we expect some practical advice on how we can conquer our problems.

And let's be honest, God is our chief problem. So how do we conquer God? How do we comprehend God, understand God, and so use our knowledge of God, to get from God what it is that we want?

So "After this," we expect someone to tell us what to do.

Well, this is so very hard for us modern people to take, but "after this," Revelation 4:1, we're really not mentioned, *as such*, in the rest of the book. I mean, the seven churches, *as such*, are not mentioned in the rest of the book. There is no, "Do this..." or "Don't do that..."—no instructions for us, no practical advice offered to us... So, we think it must not be about us.

In fact, the popular view in the American Church today is that we get raptured in chapter 4 verse 1. So, the rest of the Revelation really isn't about us (it's just gossip about others). We think it's not about us.

And that's strange . . . because, according to chapter 1, this part that doesn't seem to be about us, is the *beginning* of the very section that is *precisely* for us. Chapter 1:11 the voice says, "Write what you see . . . and send it to the churches."

Maybe it's for us, precisely because it isn't about us, meaning it isn't dependent on us. Maybe it's for us because *us*—the one that wants to capture the moon—is the *problem*, not the *solution*.

The Voice says, I will show you what "*must take place*."  
*Not* what "*should take place, could take place, or might take place* if only you had the right knowledge and made the right choices."

Maybe that's why the part we understand—the directions for the angel—is not for us. And the part we don't understand—this crazy vision—is exactly what the doctor ordered.

I used to teach the Revelation to this point, Chapter 4:1, and then stop, saying, "*I don't understand . . . after this*." I can't tell you the number of people who have said to me, "I've always avoided the Revelation, 'cause I just didn't understand." We think it's so important to understand.

Guys, if you thought you had to understand a woman—before you ever married that woman—you'd be single the rest of your life.

I think I understand more of the Revelation than I used to, but I'm still just beginning to

understand . . . that I'm *not* supposed to understand everything! Maybe if I did understand, I'd be smart as God, and then God wouldn't be much of a God. And He sure wouldn't be holy, and I'd be forever disappointed.

At the start of the Revelation, I reminded you that there are different ways of knowing, and different things that can be known.

I read about a young woman explaining a search engine to her elderly mother. They sat at the new computer as she said,

*"Mom, it can answer any question you have."*

Her mom was highly sceptical. So the daughter said,

*"Think of any question, we'll ask it, and you'll see."*

Her Mom thought for a moment and said, "OK... *How is aunt Helen feeling?*"

There are different ways of knowing, and different things to be known.  
There is one way to know objects, and another way to know persons.  
There is one way to know facts, and another way to know Aunt Helen.

Maybe God is more like Aunt Helen, and less like a computer.

You can conquer, capture, and comprehend things less than you.  
You can measure things less than you, but not things greater than you.

If you believe that "man is the measure of all things," then you must believe that "all things" are less than you, and can be comprehended by you. You must believe that you're the king of all things . . . and yet all things in your kingdom must be very disappointing, dead, unreasonable, and you must be utterly alone.

I've heard that if a tribal African wants to know something, he dances with it.  
If a modern American wants to know something, he captures it and takes it apart.  
SO:

To know the Bible, you cut it up and turn it into principles, values, practice application points, and laws that people can use to make themselves good.

To know the Revelation, you turn it into some sort of calendar to save your life and not lose your life in the Great Tribulation.

To know the Word of God, you go to seminary and master Divinity.

To know a frog, capture it, kill it, and cut it into little pieces.

To know a tree, cut it down and count its rings.

To know a wife . . . or a husband—a helper . . .

Well you could capture him, kill him, and reduce him to his constituent parts.

But then you couldn't dance with him. He'd be dead—body broken and blood shed.

You might know about him, but you could no longer know him or be known by him.

I wonder if in our lust to comprehend God, we might murder God.

I wonder if in our pursuit of reason, we might become unreasonable.

I wonder if in our desire to be good, we might crucify the Good.

I wonder if in our lust to know the Word, we might nail the Word to a tree in a garden...  
According to John, in his Gospel, John 19:41:

*"In the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden."*

I think John is suggesting that the cross was the Tree of Knowledge.  
In the Greek translation of Genesis 2 it's called "the *skulon* (which can refer to a cross or tree) . . . . the skulon of *ginoskein* (that is knowing, from *gnosis*, that is knowledge).

See? Maybe it's not just Greeks and Jews, but every sinner, that is a Gnostic.

Wasn't that the sin in the Garden?—wanting the knowledge of God more than wanting to know and be known by God? We wanted the conquest of God more than communion with God, just like the pirate who tried to capture the moon.

If Revelation 4:1 is our first step back into the Garden since we left it back in Genesis 3, maybe we had better be prepared to drop "*The fruit of the knowledge of the Good,*" in order to know the One who is Good. Make no mistake, knowledge is Good, but the way we take it may be the definition of evil.

So, maybe we should give up having to understand . . . in order to know.  
Maybe God doesn't want to be understood, but *known*, like my wife wants to be known... And like I want to be known by my wife—the bride.

Well, in September I reminded you that there's an

- Epistemology of technology—it's how we know things less than ourselves.
- And there is an epistemology of Worship—

Maybe your chief need is to stop worrying about your needs.  
Maybe your problem is your self, which can't be fixed with more of your self.  
Maybe You need to forget yourself in something greater than yourself, so you might find yourself dancing.  
Maybe you can only conquer, by being conquered, by God.

I used to subscribe to a series of preaching tapes from *Christianity Today*. On one of the tapes the host said something like this: "The sermon you are about to hear is so good because the preacher leaves the listener with many practical things to do. He doesn't just leave you with the sense that God is great."

I've thought about that statement a lot, and I need to say that I think "a sense that God is great" is pretty much *everything* that I want to leave you with.

From here on out, I think John is just going to leave us self-conscious, self-absorbed, needy, sinful, frightened, confused, Gnostic, modern believers with an overwhelming sense that God is great in every possible way!

When you see Him, you'll worship, and that is everything you need.



## Revelation 4

*After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place [not should, must] after this." At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven [lampos, in Greek] torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.*

*And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,*

*"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,  
who was and is and is to come!"*

*And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, <sup>10</sup>the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,*

*"Worthy are you, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they existed and were created."*

So John is like, out-carnated (rather than *incarnated*).

In Spirit, through the open door, he sees a throne.

- He sees something like the precious stones from the Garden of Eden.
- He sees a rainbow—the sign of the covenant given to Noah.
- He sees seven *lampos* that would be placed on lampstands, like those in the temple and like those that are the seven churches.
- He sees the sea of glass before the throne, like the molten sea in the temple before the Ark of the Covenant, God's throne on earth.
- He sees the Cherubim, like those that guarded the way to the tree of life and guard the way to the throne of God—as if, God's throne were a tree; a tree of knowledge transformed into a tree of Life (like the cross).
- He sees what Isaiah saw when he was called, and what Ezekiel saw at the Chebar Canal.
- He sees what has always been and will always be.
- He sees them praising the Holy One "*who was and is and is to come.*"
- He sees behind the veil in the temple.

- He sees the garden in the beginning.
- He sees *Reality*.
  
- He sees the throne, and someone seated on the throne,  
Which is amazing, for it's John that wrote (John 1:8, also, 1 John 4:12),  
*"No one has ever seen God... the only begotten God, in the bosom of the Father he has made him known."*
- In five more verses, John will see a slaughtered Lamb standing on the throne.  
And around the throne John sees twenty-four *presbuterous*, translated elders.  
It's where we get the word Presbyterian. He sees twenty-four Presbyterians.  
But more than simply Presbyterians—elders, like the elders of Israel.

They're sitting on twenty-four thrones. Jesus told His disciples that they'd sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Elders have white garments, and in the Revelation, people get white garments by washing those garments in the blood of the Lamb.

Folks debate the identity of the twenty-four elders, but I can't avoid the conclusion that they are *at least* the twelve sons of Israel and the twelve apostles of the Lamb. In chapter 21, the twelve apostles form the twelve foundation of the New Jerusalem and the twelve tribes form the twelve gates.

The twenty-four elders are the twelve sons of Israel and the twelve disciples of Jesus. And check this out: *every* one of them had been a pirate.

Eleven of them had actually sold one of them (their brother) into slavery in Egypt. One of them, named Judah, actually impregnated his daughter in law, whom he mistook for a pagan cult prostitute, then planned to kill her until she revealed that she was pregnant with His child—the great great... grandfather of Jesus. Twelve of these guys abandoned Jesus the night He needed them most. This is not the twenty-four Bible scholars or the twenty-four super Zen masters. These are the twenty-four fishermen, shepherds, tax-collectors, and sinners. One of these guys might just be named Judas. One of these guys is certainly named Peter. And . . . One of these guys is named John.

So check this out, John sees himself, Eph. 2:6 *"seated with God, in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."* He sees 24 pirates, but something is radically different about each one of them.

- Pirates are all about taking life, knowledge and whatever they judge to be good.
- Pirates are all about taking glory, honor and power.
- Pirates are all about crowning themselves.

But the twenty-four continually cast their crowns before the throne saying, *"Worthy are you to receive glory and honor and power, our Lord and God, for you created all things,*

*and by your will they were created.”*

If God created *all* things, then we are worthy of *no* things . . .  
Unless it's God's will to give us those things . . .  
But then, we wouldn't be proud of anything.  
We'd be *grateful* for everything and start dancing.

God created all things, and with His Will, they were created.  
His Will is His Word and His Word is Jesus.  
Jesus is the Faithful Witness.  
And we are the pirate who tried to capture the moon.

You cannot understand everything in Revelation chapter 4,  
But if you don't yet understand the point of this sermon . . . just listen to the rest of *The Pirate Who Tried to Capture the Moon*.

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And the pirate sailed that bursting ship back to his island. And he waited. Clouds moved across the sky.

The wind blew the empty sea. And finally the moon rose.

But when it looked down, it saw that everything it loved was gone. So it moved down to look a little closer. And the fierce pirate, sitting on his island, laughed. The moon looked again, but still it saw no curtains, it saw no small hills.  
So again it came a little closer.

The pirate laughed again, and stood up to sharpen his sword. And the moon looked and saw nothing and came still closer. It looked and looked through streets and in villages and down empty wells. There were no pools of water. There were no poets, no lonely dancers.

So it came closer still.

And the pirate, seeing the moon come lower, yelled out, "Moon! I have captured every ship and everything you love, and now I will capture you!"

Then he threw open the hatch. And the moon saw everything it loved streaming out of the pirate's ship and onto the pirate's island. Kitchen curtains and long candles and violins playing sad music and moody poets and lonely wolves and dancers who danced in the middle of the night. It gave a little sigh and came closer to the island, and the pirate watched. Still the moon drew closer, and the pirate saw it grow.

"I didn't know the moon was quite so big," he thought. And still the moon came down, the moon came down, closer, still closer. And the pirate started to feel afraid. He tore through the book that told all about the moon, but he couldn't find a place that told how big the moon was. And the moon came down, growing larger, larger than the pirate's ship, larger than his island, larger than anything the pirate had ever seen.

The pirate trembled, and he thought, "If I return everything I've captured, that will surely stop the moon." So he cut the saddles and the bits from the wild horses, and the chain from the flowers, and they drifted out to sea. And a shadow passed across the giant moon; it was the birds streaming away.

And still the moon came down. So the pirate freed the madly playing violins and the howling wolves, the poets chanting and the pools bursting from their barrels, and he sent them sailing home.

Moonlight spread over the waves, it covered his empty island. The pirate lifted his trembling sword as the whole sky became the moon.

And then the moon stopped. And waited.

The pirate stared into its light and a wild shiver ran through him like a wave. He forgot about being afraid. He forgot about being fierce. He lowered his sword, he dropped his armor, and he whispered, "Moon, wonderful moon, it is you who have captured me."

And the moon glowed through him and above him. Then, slowly, it started back into the sky, growing smaller, growing distant, until once again it sailed as it pleased. It drifted over the sea and over the island where now there was someone new the moon loved, who loved the moon.

For at that moment, in the middle of the night, the pirate began to dance.

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Any "good deed" that's not a part of that dance, isn't a good deed, but sin.  
"*Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin,*" wrote Paul.  
Faith is trusting God's great Love for you, and it looks like worship.

Worship is that old pirate's dance.

To Dance, you must lose yourself, and find yourself dancing.  
If you make yourself dance, concentrating on every step, you're not really dancing.  
And if you must make yourself worship, you're not really worshipping.  
If you say, "Wow I'm a great worshiper, for I really know how to worship and I really work at worshipping," your not worshipping . . . God.  
But you are worshipping yourself in the place of God.  
You're a pirate trying to capture the moon.

You can't make yourself worship in Spirit and in Truth,  
But you can be reminded to look at the moon.

That's what they needed in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea—they needed a vision of the Moon, the Throne (Ps. 89—the throne of the seed of David is like the moon). They needed to look to the throne and see what John saw. They needed a Revelation of Jesus.

That's what we try to do each week here in our service of worship.  
That's what you do whenever you give thanks in Jesus' name.  
That's why we sing, and study, and meet, and do acts of kindness—we're hoping to get a glimpse of the throne, so all our dance steps become the pirate's dance.

The pirate who tried to capture the moon, and was captured by the moon. . .

Perhaps God creates pirates, who try to capture the moon  
So *that* the moon can capture those pirates,  
So *that* those pirates will dance forever in the light of His love.

John 12:32: "*And when I am lifted up from the earth [and He was speaking of His death, notes John] I will draw all people to myself.*"

[Peter begins to sing] "Dancing in the moonlight. Everybody felling warm and bright..."  
You might be thinking, "Nice metaphor but the moon didn't actually come down. And to capture the moon is completely unreasonable."

Well according to Scripture, the moon is the "Faithful Witness."  
And the *Faithful Witness* is Jesus.

Revelation 6:12-13: "*When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood....*"

According to Scripture, on the sixth day of the week, at the sixth hour of the day on what I believe was the sixth day of creation, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth. For Jesus, the Faithful Witness, had been nailed to a tree by all of us. He cried "*Father forgive them*" and at 3:00 p.m., He died. A Roman Centurion dropped to his knees and began to worship: he was *a pirate the moon loved . . . who now loved the moon.*

Fifty days later, Peter stood up on Pentecost and said, "*These men are not drunk as you suppose.*" (Not drunk...but, they were moonstruck.)

*"These men are not drunk...This is what was prophesied by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days I will pour out my spirit on all flesh...and I will show signs in the heavens. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood.'"*

Peter talked as if all those listening had *already* seen these things.

Many scholars date the crucifixion to the Friday before Passover, April 3<sup>rd</sup> 33 AD. And now, due to modern astronomy and computers, we know that around 3:00 p.m. on Friday April 3, 33 AD, the moon went into full eclipse below the horizon of the Judean desert and rose blood red the evening of April 3 as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus (the light of the world) and placed it in the tomb. That's art!

I don't know if the scholars and computers got all the calculations right, but I do know that all us pirates . . . captured the Moon.

We captured the Moon because . . .

The Moon had always planned to be captured by us,

In order that we might be captured by Him—the Moon,

That we might be captured by Love and dance in His Light forever.

You can only conquer, by being conquered by love.

You can only truly know because you've been known by Jesus.

So look to the throne—it's where you'll find the Lamb.

### **Communion**

On the night He was betrayed He took bread and broke it saying, "*This is my body given to you. Take and eat.*" In the same way He took the cup saying, "*This cup is the covenant in my blood.*" For 1,500 years the Jews had been learning "*the life is in the blood.*"

Listen closely: we took the Life. But He *forgave* the Life, which is Himself.

You can't take the Life (like a pirate) if you know that you've already been *given* the Life (like a son).

And one last thing! Revelation 4 raises a fascinating little question: The twenty-four elders cast their crowns whenever the Cherubim say, "Holy, Holy, Holy." And the Cherubim never cease saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy," which means the twenty-four elders never cease casting their crowns...

And so this is the question: Who keeps putting the crowns back on their heads? Psalm 103:4 "*The Lord forgives all your iniquity [John, Peter, Judas, Judah, Israel, children of Adam] and crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.*"

They cast their crowns and the Lord must crown them again, and again, and again.

It must look like a dance, and you see, it *is* a dance.

It's the Old Pirate's dance. And it's holy.

It's holy, for it moves in the exact opposite direction of the human ego and this entire fallen world.

They continually cast their crowns and the Lord crowns them continually. [Peter picks up cups from the communion table and as he says the following words spoken between

John (the author of Revelation) and Jesus, he pours wine back and forth between the cups.]

Jesus says, *"I crown you John with steadfast Love and mercy."*

And John says, *"Jesus, worthy are you of all glory, honor, and power"* and then he casts his crown before Jesus.

Jesus says, *"I love you."*

And John says, *"I love you"*

Jesus says, *"You're awesome."*

And John says, *"No, you're awesome."*

[Peter pours wine back and forth between the cups to show the process just keeps going, and going.] You see? All this steadfast Love, it never ceases.

This happens continually, and so, that Steadfast Love must form a river. That river is the river of Life that flows from the throne—through all of creation—and returns as praise. And that Dance is the Body of Christ rising from the grave.

Come to the throne and cast your crowns before Him.

### **Prayer**

"Jesus, it's liberating to confess that all week I've been trying to crown myself. We try to crown ourselves and worry about it all the time. Right now we come to the throne and say that you are worthy of all glory, honor, and power. Amen.

[Several worship songs are sung.]

### **Prayer**

Thank you for opening the eyes of our heart just a little more and allowing us to see you. Then we can't help but adore you.

### **Benediction**

Do you remember that hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy"? There's a line in it that says, "All the saints adore you." Do you know what the word "saint" means? It means "holy one." We say, "Holy, holy, holy," and then somehow we are called "holy ones" or "saints".

"All the saints adore you." That's what it takes to be a saint—to adore Him. But here's the rub: you can't just decide to adore Him. That's not adoration. Adoration is something that happens when you see Him so I'm just reminding you saints, keep looking at Him and He will transform you. Just like the moon I as transformed by the sun. You reflect the glory of the light of the sun and you become a saint. So in the name of Jesus, saints of the living God, believe the Gospel.

*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 or video version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*

