

Lent, Day 20
Thursday, March 28, 2019

Revelation 11:15–19

I don't ever plan to go to Las Vegas, but if I ever do to, I know that I cannot gamble. Not even so much as a dollar. This is in part because I have a fairly addictive personality. More though, I wouldn't know when to stop. I would wipe our finances out with foolish betting. I have to tell myself all this because the idea of gambling is appealing to me. I can picture myself suavely saying, "I only bet on sure things." While in reality, I have no idea what I'm doing.

Many people wonder about Christian's decisions not to participate in much of what the world offers as good. Often this is interpreted as trying to be moral in order to be acceptable to God. They wonder why we would miss out on all the good stuff life has to offer on the low possibility God is real, or cares. To them it's a foolish bet.

The first thing we have to address in that thinking is that we cannot earn God's approval. This shouldn't conjure up an image of an angry god up in the clouds, sternly disapproving of all that we do. Rather, this is to simply affirm what we say to each other every day, the world and humanity is not what it should be. This situation also saddens God and rather than destroying everything in anger, he sets about making it right in love. Christians seek to live up to what God has revealed, not to gain approval, but in response to that self-sacrificing and merciful love.

Revelation uses the language of the seals, but it is affirming what the gospels (and the whole of Scripture for that matter) tell us. Our healing comes through the work of Jesus the Christ. He is a sure thing. When Christians speak about hope, they don't mean a "cross your fingers" hope. They mean a sure hope. Verse fifteen says clearly that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ. Not future tense, but present tense. This is also why the description of God has changed from the beginning of the book to, "the one who are and who were." No longer is he the one to come because the future is now present. God's work through Christ is finished. Wright summarizes this wonderfully:

Through the awful turmoil and trouble of the world, God is establishing through Jesus a people who, following the lamb, are to bear witness to God's kingdom through their own suffering, through which the world will be brought to repentance and faith, so that ultimately God will be king over all.¹

In short, Christians aren't making a gamble at all. Christ has surely done it all. His reign has already begun. And, because it has begun it will be finished totally. We can also be this people of God without turning it into an opportunity to coerce God because Christ has already made us his irrespective of our sin.

Prayer

¹ N. T. Wright, *Revelation for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 103.

God who was and is, thank you for your victory in Christ. Thank you that while we were still your enemies, ungodly, you died for us. Thank you for making a way where there was no way. Thank you to our God and King. Amen.