

THE MESSAGE

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Revelation 8:1-5

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Silence is Golden

Story, “The Moth and The Cocoon.” It goes something like this... *A man found a cocoon of an emperor moth (see picture on the screen). He took it home, so that he could watch the moth come out of the cocoon.*



One day, a small opening appeared, and he sat still, watching for several hours, as the moth struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then, it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared, as if, it had gotten so far but couldn't go any farther. It seemed to be stuck. So the man in his kindness, decided to help the moth.

He took a pair of scissors, and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The moth emerged very easily. But, it had a swollen body and really small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the moth, because he expected, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to support the body, and he expected the body to shrink to a more normal size. Neither one happened! In fact, that little moth spent the rest of its life, crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It was never able to fly.

What the man, in his kindness and haste, did not understand was that, the restricting cocoon and the struggle to get through that tiny opening, was God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the moth, into its wings, so it would be ready for flight, once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon. Freedom and flight would only come after the struggle. By depriving the moth of the struggle, the man deprived the moth of a healthy new life.

Sometimes, struggles are exactly what we need in our lives. If God allowed us to go through life without any struggles, without any challenges, without any obstacles, we would be crippled in so many ways. We would not be as strong as what we could have been without going through those struggles, challenges, and obstacles.

When it comes to faith development, when it comes to growth and new life in Christ through the church we need struggles, we need challenges, we need obstacles. Ask any athlete and they will tell you, “No pain, no gain!” When it comes to our faith development a similar thing applies.

Who here today in worship is not facing a challenge or a struggle or an obstacle of some kind? Trouble with a spouse or a family member or a friend or a neighbor or a co-worker or with God or with a pastor or with the church... Do we not find ourselves facing tough times - scary times - of one kind or another... spiritual, emotional, financial, relational, you name it.

Maybe, just maybe, God put that challenge there to help you grow. Maybe, just maybe, the cocoon you find yourself trying to crawl out of right now is God at work preparing you, making you stronger in some way, for a new life on the other side to take you to a new place and a new height for a new purpose. Maybe...

Point is life in the 21st century can get pretty scary at times, full of challenges and struggles and obstacles of various kinds. We are living in uncertain times and the rate of change continues to accelerate. It's not a matter of *if*, but *when*. Odds are we will encounter trouble times, scary times in our lifetime.

When our children get scared, the first thing they do is run to mom or dad for safety and comfort. A child clinging to mom or dad's pant leg or cuddled in mom or dad's arms is a picture of peace in the midst of trials and tribulations.

Today we continue with week two of our four week study of the book of Revelation. It is ultimately a book of hope designed to drive us back into the loving care and embrace of God. The language of Revelation is descriptive rather than prescriptive. As we learned last week, it is not a book about doom and gloom for the future but about hope and faith for living in the present.

The book of Revelation was written to remind the reader of one very important thing: that without God, life is uncertain and can lead to death and destruction. But with God, there is life and hope and promise.

Our reading from Revelation 8 is pretty short so we need to read it in light of the chapters before it beginning with chapter 5.

Let me set the stage... An angel of the Lord is holding a scroll which contains seven messages. The scroll is sealed with seven seals which is to be opened by Jesus, the Lamb of God, the one and the only one who is worthy to open it. In chapters 6 and 7, as each scroll is opened, the scene unfolds with more and more awesome things, pointing out how awesome life with God really is.

The scene is a heavenly throne room. And it is spectacular, filled with splendor and grandeur, beauty and brilliance. Everything points to God and God's glory. There are seven angels with seven trumpets; an eighth angel has a golden censer. The censer is filled with incense for worship and praise to the One in whom there is peace and joy and hope and mercy and grace! The last of the seven seals is finally broken, and the trumpets prepare to announce the revealing, to announce the revelation, to announce the message.

And then, there is silence for about half an hour. Silence in heaven. Golden silence for 30 minutes. Encouraging one and all to focus on God to put our trust in God, because apart from God there is no security, no life, no reason for being...

Revelation is a hope-filled book, a profound reminder of the majesty of God and God's faithfulness to us, to encourage us during difficult, frightening times. God is faithful. Say that with me. *God is faithful...*

Last week we learned that God is in charge and this week we learn that God is faithful. Since God is faithful then we can face the challenges, the struggles, the obstacles that are before us, with God's help.

Fear is what prevents us from moving forward. So consider this:

* Whatever your greatest fear is today, Jesus is Lord over that fear and promises to coach you *through* it.

* Whatever is keeping you in your cocoon, Jesus is Lord over that cocoon and promises to coach you *out of* it.

* Whatever in your life that seems to overwhelm you right now with doom and gloom, Jesus is Lord of that too and promises to coach you *beyond* it.

Since God is faithful we need to stop, to be still, and to listen to God about ½ an hour should do. So... let's sit here in silence for about ½ an hour... Could you imagine doing so... If not here this morning then what if, we took 30 minutes of silence each day this week to be in God's presence.

What if, for 30 minutes on Monday you found a quiet place to call God's throne room and you sat in silence, and simply listened. You might want to use Revelation 8:1-5 as the basis for that listening time. Just listen. Listen for God's Holy Spirit to speak to you through these words.

What if, for 30 minutes on Tuesday you found a quiet place again in God's presence and this time quietly name your fears. All of them, offering them up to God.

What if, for 30 minutes on Wednesday you took a piece of paper or a journal and wrote down how God has met you so far in the week. Look back and acknowledge God's faithfulness in your life.

What if, for 30 minutes of silence on Thursday, you found a new venue. Explore a quiet place to walk. Walk around the neighborhood or a lake, go to a park, go somewhere quiet. Just walk and listen for God to remind you of God's faithfulness.

What if, for 30 minutes of silence on Friday, you prayed for the needs of someone you know who is struggling. Be specific and ask God to meet that person in his or her needs. Let your heart be filled with gratitude for how God is at work in that person's life.

What if, for 30 minutes of silence on Saturday, you found a dark place, light a candle, and focus on the light of Christ in your life and let the light of Christ shine in you and through you to make the world a brighter place.

But... if 30 minutes every day seems like too much for you, and it might be then what if you took five minute everyday say at 6:33 to listen for God. Why at 6:33 because of Matthew 6:33 which reads, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness..." Five minutes of silence with God everyday. By week's end you will have spent 30 minutes with God.

God is closer than we think. God is faithful and will continue to be faithful in your life and in mine. Silence is a golden time to meet with God who offers peace and hope and mercy and love. With God anything and everything is possible because God is faithful. Amen.