

7 Ways of Resistance for Lent
Week Six: Revelation
Matthew 27:11-54

“Truly this man was God’s son!”

Sometimes we understand only too late. Peter understood when the cock crowed. Judas understood when he tried to give back the thirty pieces of silver.

We wait for a sign. We wait to join the movement when there are enough people. We wait to see if this time it will work before we sign up. We wait because we don’t want to rock the boat or split the group, we’ll wait and see when most, or all, have gone to one side, then we will go. We always wait too late.

Jesus understood when he cried out from the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” But he also understood when he went into the waters of baptism. “Let it be so, to fulfill all righteousness.”

He knew the path would lead to death, and still he chose it.

Yet we hesitate because we don’t want to put someone off. We hesitate because we don’t want to lose anyone from our group. We won’t say anything religious or political or anything that might cause another to pause and think differently about us. We say it’s because we don’t want to hurt someone’s feelings, but in reality, it’s because we don’t want to change their impression of us.

We hesitate because we are selfish and self-conscious. Our hesitation is not inaction; it is a reverse action, an action opposite of that which we know we are supposed to do.

“Become last of all and servant of all. Deny yourself, carry your cross, and follow me,” he commanded. That’s an active call to faith. An active call to justice. An active call to put our reservations and our selfishness behind because there is something greater.

“Follow me.”

Follow him to where? Because if we follow Jesus, we go down the path that risks it all. Our freedom. Our pride. Our very lives. The movement is a revolution on the way we live. No longer living to save our own lives, but living to save the lives of others.

That personal salvation message that we often hear from others doesn’t hold up when we are called to deny ourselves, take up the cross, become last of all and servant of all, and follow Jesus. It’s much more about living in ways that others may live. Salvation, after all, is about the world (see John 3:16-17).

In the musical *Hamilton*, the guys are all sitting around drinking, telling “The Story of Tonight,” and their glory in revolution. Angelica sings, “You want a revolution—I want a REVELATION.”

Revelation: something not before realized or understood.

Revolution is changing our thinking, but we need a revelation to get there.

“Truly, this man was God’s Son.”

The centurion got it too late. Peter and Judas got it too late.

Annakin in *Return of the Jedi* came so darn close to being too late, but he got it right before he died, saved Luke, and saved the galaxy by doing so. But it wasn't because of anything he did, it was because Luke believed there was still good in him. "You were right about me."

It's not too late for us, just as ultimately it was not too late for the centurion, or Peter, or (I believe) even Judas. Truly, Jesus meant what he said when he called us to become last of all, servant of all, deny ourselves, take up that cross and follow him. The path to salvation is collective, not individual, not personal.

Jesus went to the cross for humanity, died to himself so that we might all know and have eternal life. Because he believes there is still good in all of us. And, he is right about us. That is the big revelation: God's created intention in us, created for good works (Ephesians 2:10), is still there. Despite the sin in the world, the systems of oppression that we have created and maintained, the evil that exists—there is still good in us. There is still something worth saving. There is still something worth living for, now and for eternity, and Jesus shows us the way.

Worship Ideas for Revelation

- Decorate the table with beautiful stones or flowers, or other symbols of beauty that you can think of. Then cover the table with a dark cloth. Let only a corner be shown underneath the cloth (symbolizing the veil of death waiting to be pulled away).
- Layer the table with white origami paper (or another solid color). Invite members who know how to fold origami to take a piece of paper and make something during the service. Invite them to bring their creations forward at the end, revealing something made new.
- If you have palms for Palm Sunday, fold the palms into crosses and have them brought forward near the end of the service to decorate the table ([you can download instructions here](#))

Mission Ideas for Revelation

- Invite a local social justice organization to speak to your congregation about the needs in your own community and what can be done to help.
- Look up local environmental initiatives and learn about environmental concerns that need to be revealed to your own congregation.
- Learn about the first people who lived in your area. Where are they now? What happened to them? If you live near a First Nation or Native American cultural center, plan a visit. Learn about colonialism and white settler impact today.

Liturgy (from Philippians 2:5-11)

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

*Who did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,*

But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant,

Born in human likeness, and found in human form,

He humbled himself to the point of death,

Even death on a cross.

Therefore God highly exalted him,

And gave him the name above every name.

So that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend in heaven and on earth,

And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

To the glory of God,

We worship, and confess that Christ is our Lord, and no other. Amen.

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy Jesus, we confess that we have not followed You and Your ways. We have not become humble. We have not served others well. Instead, we have been overcome by selfish gain and put ourselves first. We have not denied ourselves, but instead satiated our appetites. We have not taken up our cross but have put our burdens on others. We have not followed You. We want to, but we want the way of the world more. We want worldly measures of success rather than love and justice. Forgive us. Call us back to Your ways. In this Holy Week, may we repent of following the ways of the world, and turn back to You, the One who lived and died for us. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

There is still love. There is still hope. There is still healing and justice and peace. Don't give up. Keep on turning back to Christ, and follow Christ's ways. Christ has not given up on you. Christ won't give up on you. Christ is holding the door open from death to life for you, and for us all. Don't give up. Lean on one another, forgiving one another and serving one another, and we will get there together. You are loved. You are forgiven. Christ has the door open for you; enter into the loving embrace of our God. Amen.

Prayer

Hosanna! Save us, God. Save us from ourselves. Save us from our selfish ways that have caused environmental damage and harm to our human neighbors. Save us from our ignorance that has forgotten that children starve to death, in the thousands on a daily basis. Save us from our hatred that allows us to perpetuate racism and anti-Semitism and Islamaphobia. Save us from our cruelty that allows us to cry out with shouts of joy one day, and "Crucify Him" a few days later. Whether it be how we treat our Savior or the foreigner among us, we have failed to follow You. Hosanna! Save us, turn us back to You. Amen.