

“Sing praise! For the Lord’s anger is  
but for a moment; favor a lifetime.

Weeping may linger for the night,  
but in the morning... joy.” AMEN!

“I was born by the river,  
in a little tent.

Oh and just like the river,  
I’ve been runnin’ ever since.

It’s been a long, a long time com’,  
but I know, a change gon’ come.

Oh yes, it will.

Then I go to my brother, and I say,  
“Brother help me please.”

But he winds up knocking me  
back down on my knees.

Lord there been times when I thought  
I couldn’t last for long,

but now I think I’m able  
to carry on.

It's been a long, a long time coming,  
but I know a change is gon' come." (Pause)

That civil rights song, by Sam Cooke,  
was inspired by various events in Cooke's life.

From being denied lodging  
at a motel in Louisiana because of  
the color of his and his band's skin,  
even though he had a reservation,

to his performances before Black and  
white audiences having to be segregated  
by venue management and  
plainclothes police officers.

Sam was inspired to write that song  
about the necessity for change to finally come.

"It's been a long time comin'."

A song as powerful today as it was yesterday.

Living amidst Jim Crow laws,  
discrimination and segregation as  
a Black person or queer person was  
a very dark time in that day. (Pause)

On a Sunday, like today,  
in the midst of the Easter season -  
we might wonder about the difficult times  
that are ahead these days. (Pause)

In the setting of Revelation,  
we might hear the familiar words from  
the Hymn of Praise we sing during worship.

“Power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor  
and glory are his.”

A hymn we sing, that was first sung  
by voices of angels and living creatures  
and elders, numbering myriads of myriads  
and thousands of thousands  
in God’s midst.

They sang because in the vision presented,  
just prior to our reading in the bulletin,  
the question was posed by a mighty angel:

“Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?”

The answer, “No one is able.  
No one has the power required.”

Then John began to weep.

If no one can do it, how will humans know  
how God will make things right.

He broke down, but but an elder spoke to him.

“Do not weep, John.

See the Lion of the tribe of Judah,  
the Root of David, has conquered,  
so that he can break its seven seals  
and open the scroll.”

We expect John to turn and see  
a powerful being,

(rippling muscle perhaps even wearing armor)

an Aslan (the lion from the Chronicles of Narnia)  
figure - strong and mighty.

John probably was expecting that too,  
but then turned to see, not that, but

a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered.

What a sight!

“Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain,  
whose blood set us free to be people of God.”

They sang so we can sing. (Pause)

The Lamb is the anti-image of power.

The slaughtered Lamb,  
whom the empire had wrecked,  
is the Lion of Judah.

The one with the ultimate power is  
the One who the empire killed. (Pause)

Everything is transformed with the revelation.

What sort of revelation have you experienced?

What has happened in your life that told you  
God's got this, even when it felt like  
you were going mad or  
metaphorically drowning?

If you say you've never been visited  
by a presence outside of yourself,

then you haven't been paying attention, or  
you haven't had moments when  
you needed God/Higher Power/Divine Creator.

If that's the case, you haven't lived very long

because that time will always come.

And when it does, that presence, which comes,  
will not announce itself, or always shock us  
into recognition.

Most often, the Lord comes in quiet times  
and in the silence of grief;  
in the soundless mess of anxiety and  
the handwringing moments of guilt.

Come, hell and high water, the Lord comes.

You cannot predict the visit or always see it  
in the moment, but we can live in  
the awareness that helps us to be sensitive  
to the presence of this God

whose been running with humanity  
from the beginning and still  
runs with us. (Pause)

It's like Saul who had his eyes opened  
to finally see what God was up to in Jesus Christ.  
(Pause)

Let me tell a story about paying attention.

It is about an old man who suddenly

became gravely ill.

The pastor came for a final visit and noticed  
that next to the bed an chair  
was already pulled up.

“Oh, it looks as though you’ve already  
had a visitor, today.

I won’t stay long since you must be tired.”

The old man said,

“No, but let me tell you a story about the chair.

Years ago, I told a friend that when  
I prayed at night I frequently fell asleep in  
the middle of the prayer,

or I just couldn’t keep focus on  
my conversation with God.

So this friend told me to try pulling  
a chair up next to me, and imagine that  
Jesus was sitting there,

because - well you know,  
he promises to be with us.

So I started doing that and, you know,  
it made a really big difference in my prayer life.

Sometimes, when I'd open my eyes,  
I'd even think I see him sitting there, sometimes."

The pastor shared communion  
with the old man and left.

Later that evening the pastor got  
a call from the daughter.

"Dad just died. Can you come over?"

So the pastor went to see her.

The daughter said,

"You know I was in the room and dad seemed okay,  
he wasn't struggling or anything.

I left for just a minute. (Pause)

And when I came back, he was dead.

But there was something quite strange.

Somehow he had managed to rollover onto  
his side and stretch out his arm and



place his hand on the chair.” (Pause)

“It’s been a long time comin’, but  
I know change is gon’ come.”

To all of us will come weeping and joy.

One thing we can do today is  
to let ourselves be brought together.

Like Saul heard the voice of Jesus and  
followed his direction and like Ananias,

becoming a willing disciple that  
went to assist a dangerous person.

They came together.

Saul was a dangerous person and  
Ananias is the church that’s willing to meet  
with enemies to see what God’s up to in  
making them authentic followers, too.

(Pause)

In the gospel, Peter and the others go fishing.

They are brought together to  
do what they’re good at.

Fish.

Yet, they catch nothing.

Not a thing.

Until they, too, listen to Jesus and  
follow his commands.

And would you look at that,  
that's when they recognize who this stranger is  
on the shore. (Pause)

Peter's proclamation to Jesus about his love  
for the Lord was done three times.

It's important to note the three time of  
his love profession connects with  
his three times of denial  
after Jesus was arrested,

but even more critical for us is to know  
what Jesus called him to do...  
feed and tend to God's sheep and lambs.

This is how we co-create with God's  
mission of bringing about the change  
that is necessary for our nation and world.

This is what we are called and equipped to do.

Difficult times will come,  
but they will not last.

And so we come together,  
listen to Jesus,  
and we sing.

AMEN!