

Come, Lord Jesus! (. . . but there's a lion in the way)

Revelation 22

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Genesis 3:24, the Great Veiling: "God drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life."

Revelation 22:1: *Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads.

And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

We sure would like to get to that tree of life and that river of the water of life, because sometimes we feel like we're going to just *die* of thirst.

At the beginning of The Silver Chair in The Chronicles of Narnia, the girl Jill finds herself alone, guilty, and terribly thirsty in a different world. She has just done a very prideful and stupid thing, so she cries and cries and then finds herself extremely thirsty. She spies a beautiful stream across a meadow. (Her thirst increases ten times.) As she turns to the stream she suddenly freezes in her tracks, for in front of the stream is an immense lion . . . like the flaming sword before the tree of life.

The lion looks at her as if it knows her.

"If I run away, it'll be after me in a moment," thought Jill. "And if I go on, I shall run straight into its mouth." Anyway, she couldn't have moved if she had tried, and she couldn't take her eyes off it. How long this lasted, she could not be sure; it seemed like hours. And the thirst became so bad that she almost felt she would not mind being eaten by the Lion if only she could be sure of getting a mouthful of water first.

"If you're thirsty, you may drink."

. . . For a second she stared here and there, wondering who had spoken. Then the voice said again, "If you are thirsty, come and drink" . . . it was the Lion speaking . . . and the voice was not like a man's. It was deeper, wilder, and stronger; a sort of heavy, golden voice. It did not make her any less frightened than she had been before, but it made her frightened in rather a different way.

"Are you not thirsty?" said the Lion.

"I'm *dying* of thirst," said Jill.

"Then drink," said the Lion.

“May I—could I—would you mind going away while I do?” said Jill.

The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl. And as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realised that she might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience.

The delicious rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic.

“Will you promise not to—do anything to me, if I do come?” said Jill.

“I make no promise,” said the Lion.

Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer.

“*Do you eat girls?*” she said.

“I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms,” said the Lion. It didn’t say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

“I daren’t come and drink,” said Jill.

“Then you will die of thirst,” said the Lion.

“Oh dear!” said Jill, coming another step nearer. “I suppose I must go and look for another stream then.”

“There is no other stream,” said the Lion.

Jesus is the Lion.

Revelation 5: “Lo, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered.”

He is the Lion, and He’s not a *tame* Lion. Like Mr. Beaver said, “Safe? . . . Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe.”

See, I think we’re just like Jill: dreadfully thirsty, and we’re beginning to see the river and the tree. The New Jerusalem is coming down, and Jesus says, “Let him who is thirsty come,” and we say, “Thank you! . . . but there’s a lion in the way. Could the lion go . . . somewhere else . . . *somewhen else . . . please?*”

If not, we try to tame the Lion. Human religion is man’s quest to make the holy God tame, to make the awesome God trivial. Dorothy Sayers wrote: “We have very efficiently pared the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified Him ‘Meek and mild,’ and recommended Him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies.”

I’ve always longed for the water of life and the power of God, but I remember the first time I saw a demon cast out of a man. (And it wasn’t subtle; it wasn’t manipulative hype; it was obviously real and incredibly powerful and meaningful.) I remember I was *terrified* . . . not of the demon but of the One who cast it out . . . not of my friend Scott but of the One whose name he invoked: Jesus, the Lion of Judah.

I was terrified because it was entirely obvious that at any moment He could *eat* me, if He so desired. So I tried to remember how He looked on the flannel graph in Sunday School: “Meek and mild.” I had an insatiable longing for trivia (meaningless things). I prayed, “God, could I just watch ‘I Love Lucy’ for a while?” (hide from the Meaning in trivia).

I’m so thankful for this church. Last week, caught up in what I was saying, at two of the services I used a politically incorrect potty word in quoting Satan, rather than the more socially

acceptable potty word. I believe I was biblical in my usage, and I meant what I said. Well, I'm so thankful for this church, for there are many, many churches from which I would have been fired this week.

I've wondered, How can the Evangelical Church get so side-tracked by trivia? Do we really believe the meaning, that Satan, the Ancient Dragon, wars against the Church? Because I just can't imagine a war movie where the soldiers are so easily offended by the nuances of potty words. Do we *believe* "the time is at hand"? That we are the Bride and the Word—the Meaning—the Bridegroom—stands waiting to fill us with life and joy?

Maybe we're *starting* to believe the Meaning, so we hide from the Meaning in trivia.

Maybe we're not really offended at trivia, we're offended by *Him*, by "the gold lion, the bearded bull— which breaks through the hedges and scatters the kingdom of our primness" (Lewis).

Maybe the Lion begins to scare us because He's *not* trivial. So we hide in trivia.

Maybe He's not just words.

Maybe He's not just metaphors.

Verse 6: *These words are faithful and true.*

The Revelation is *not* a metaphor. In Revelation 19 Jesus is *called* "Faithful and True."

He's alive, He's the Word, He's the Meaning;
And from His mouth comes a sword;
The sword pierces to the division
Of soul and spirit, joint and marrow.

He cuts us; we don't cut Him;
He's not a metaphor; He is the meaning;
He is the Word that cuts us
Before the tree of life.

Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

The Lion scares us, so we try to keep Him trivial. And we try to keep Him distant. But these things must take place "quickly" ("taxi" in Greek.) It doesn't mean "soon" as much as "without delay"; "at once." It's the word used by the angel at the tomb on Easter morning when he says to the women, "Go tell the disciples *at once*."

The Revelation of Jesus has been happening ever since that morning. “The ‘kairos’ [time] is at hand” (Revelation 22:10). “‘Chronos’ [time] shall be no more” (Revelation 10:6).

In Daniel, Daniel is instructed to “seal up the scroll” because it pertains to the distant future and the time of the end. In The Revelation, John is told to “not seal up the scroll” because the time is at hand.

Eternal life (“kairos”) invades temporal existence (“chronos”) *now* . . . whenever we walk by faith, and ultimately at the end of the age, which I believe is also the day your body dies and you breathe your last breath.

But Jesus and His kingdom are not distant, not just in the distant past or just in the future on some chart. Jesus is not distant.

He is *The Bridegroom* standing with longing at the bedroom door.

He is *The Wind* that blows through your soul, crying “Abba, Daddy.”

He is *The Word* that upholds every fiber of your being.

He is *The Meaning* in every sentence.

He is *The Light* that enlightens all men.

“He is closer to everything than anything is to itself” (Luther).

And when we first see it, it fills us with *terror*. We say, “Could the Lion please stand . . . some place else?” — *Distant*.

Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, “See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.” And he said to me, “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. . . .”

In verse 9 the revealing angel says, “Stop that! Worship God!”

We tend to worship The Revelation rather than the One revealed, because the One revealed is a dangerous, wild Lion. So people buy books, go to prophecy seminars, stuff their heads with endless trivia about The Revelation predicting Jesus will come to Jerusalem in 2059 or whatever . . . but they ignore Jesus, who has already come to them in their wife and kids, who is already lifted up, who is already judging in the last and least, who is already romancing them into communion and the sacrificial, passionate surrender of consuming love.

What’s worse, these folks seal up the book, saying things like, “You *couldn’t* have seen the rider on the white horse! He must come *after* the ten-nation European confederacy!”

Some idolize the letter in order to hide from its meaning (in their own mind).

Some worship the angel. They fall down before the revealing angel and idolize their own ecstatic experiences.

Don't worship the mailman; don't worship the mail.

This *is* "The Revelation of Jesus" . . . not end times calendars or ecstatic experiences. *Worship God.* And don't just *do* something, worship God!

Verse 11: "*He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.*"

After all the warfare, after all the talk of conquering, "Let him be unjust still"? "Let him be righteous still"? You worship God.

We try to tame the Lion by turning Him into "our project." For if it's something *we* do, we're at least in control. Then the project is trivial but *safe* . . . and we can feel good about ourselves.

Two cub scouts came running home weeping because their little brother had fallen into the lake. One of them sobbed, "Mom, we tried to give him CPR, but he kept getting up and walking away."

We are so tempted to be the savior. But salvation is not something we can do alone. It's more like something God has already done, "a good work we walk in." If you want a project, read Marx or Mohammed. They teach *great projects* accomplished by human power. But if you want to conquer, you must somehow be conquered by the Lion.

Jesus saves the unjust;
Jesus cleanses the filthy;
Jesus builds His Church.

If you want to be part of His project, you must be in Him—in the Lion. *Worship God.*

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work."

These must be "the righteous deeds of the saints granted to the bride," the fruit that grows when I "abide in Him" . . . "for apart from Him I can do nothing."

I'm not in control; I don't even understand the meaning.

Verse 13: "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.* [He's the plot.] *Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the*

tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.”

Well, in the last chapter we read that their lot was the lake of fire. Three verses earlier Jesus says, “Behold, I make all things new.” In chapter 5 verse 13 John hears “every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth praising God.”

I don’t understand that. In some verses John talks as if *every creature* gets saved. In some he talks as if they don’t. I can’t explain that to you. If I respected Scripture *less*, I could. I could say, “John didn’t really mean it here, but he did there.”

I can’t even explain where I end and Jesus begins. I still wonder about the seven angel messengers in the seven churches, and is that the seven-fold Spirit of God? And is that the seven bowl angels that show John the Harlot and Bride that he is commanded to not worship? All that just draws me into this deeper mystery of what is God and what is me.

I wonder about the mystery of His sovereign will expressed in my own free will. What it is to be His body sanctified by His Spirit?

I wonder about all the mysteries of evil and judgment; for instance, is the fire in Christ’s eyes the lake of fire into which evil is thrown? Is that also the fire that purifies us, the children of God? Is that the fire which falls at Pentecost and rides on the words of our tongues? The fire that is on the flaming sword that guards the way to the tree of life . . . and that “pierces the division of soul and spirit”? “Our *God* is a consuming fire”! *Mystery*.

And the seven thunders are *commanded* mysteries. (“John, don’t write it down.”)

I know that in this series I have said tons of things you didn’t understand. I know that, for in this series I’ve said tons of things *I* didn’t understand. But I said them anyway, because they’re true. I could see there was incredible meaning in the mystery; I just couldn’t capture and tame the meaning.

Once I read, “Mystery is not the absence of meaning, but the presence of more meaning than we can comprehend.”

We are very uncomfortable with mystery. We want to capture the meaning and kill the mystery. So we hire pastors to hunt down meaning and kill mystery. It’s how we tame the Lion and make Him safe. A tame lion is a predictable lion.

I *can’t* explain the Meaning . . . but I’ve *met* the Meaning! I can’t explain my wife, but I know her. To explain her to some folks in the modern era I would have to dissect her—carve her up like a frog. Then I could *pretend* to explain her, but I would no longer know her. She’d be dead.

Verse 16: “*I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.*”

He is the Root of David, the source of David. Revelation 5: “The Root of David is the Lion of Judah.” To get to the water we try to make Him tame . . . try to make Him a metaphor . . . try to keep Him at a distance . . . try to turn Him into a lesson or a feeling or a project we do . . . try to turn Him into something trivial—something small—that fits in our own self-centered, little world. In short, we try to *kill* Him. And here’s the most astounding thing of all:

He has already made Himself small.
He already allowed us to kill Him.

“Behold, the Lion of Judah has conquered!” John looks and “sees a lamb standing as though it had been slain.” “The Word [Flaming Sword—the Rider on the white horse] became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth.” And He *still* wasn’t small enough—trivial enough—tame enough—understood enough. So the religions people carved Him up, strung Him up, and killed Him.

It was probably there,
as a baby in a manger,
as a flannel graph Jesus,
or as a slaughtered Lamb on a cross,
that you picked Him up and said, “Be my Lord.”

He didn’t deceive you; He told you He was “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” He told you He was the “Lion of the tribe of Judah.” It’s just that you were blind and in a drunken stupor. You were dreaming your own dreams.

But now He has entered your insane, little dream. Only One that great can become that small. He’s waking you up.

Dan Weidman tells about a night a few years ago when his brother-in-law and his drunken friends were coming home from the bowling alley and they hit a deer. They got out to check the car and looked at the deer lying in the road. One of the guys was a hunter, and he said, “Let’s take it home and carve it up.”

They put the body of the deer in the front seat, and all except the driver climbed in the back. A few miles down the road something amazing began to happen. The deer began to move . . . a lot. It wasn’t dead. And before they could get the car stopped, the deer managed to crack the windshield, smash the dashboard, break the side window, and inflict some serious bodily damage on the dazed boys in the back seat.

You see, my dear church friends, you’ve hit something far more terrible than a deer. You’ve hit the Lion. Driving drunk you careened into the living God and killed Him . . . you thought He was dead.

But it’s not as if it wasn’t planned. He planned it before time . . . an ambush. He waited in the road and you picked Him up . . . small and trivial. But the baby in the manger grows. The

battered man on the cross rises from the dead. The slaughtered Lamb is *still* the Lion. He's waking up . . . or I should say He's waking *you* up.

You . . . try to tame Him,
 try to make Him trivial,
 try to control Him,
 try to understand Him,
 try to make Him a metaphor,
 try to keep Him at a distance.

But it's too late! You've already picked Him up . . . and He will not leave you.

This is The Revelation—the Apocalypse—the unveiling of Jesus. His love is a consuming fire, and He *will have* all of you.

About a year ago we opened The Revelation.

We came looking for meaning, and He is The Meaning.
We wanted some words, and He is The Word.
We wanted revelation, and He is The Revelation.
We wanted to know when, and He is When: I AM.
We wanted directions, and He is The Way.
We wanted answers, and He is The Truth.
We wanted the water of life, and the Lion *in the way is*
 The Way, The Truth, and The Life.
We came wanting to conquer, and He conquers us.
We came to get a drink, and it turns out we're not the
 only ones thirsty.

Verse 17: *And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.*

Who is thirsty . . . really?

In John 4 *Jesus* is thirsty. He asks the Samaritan woman for water, and then He tells her He has living water. Yet to get the water, she must surrender her heart and confess her five husbands and her own thirst. Jesus tells her that God is thirsty for worshipers.

We never know if Jesus gets His drink until the end of John. On the cross Jesus says, "I thirst" . . . and then He cries, "It is finished."

Well, "the Spirit and the Bride [perhaps the Spirit *in* the Bride] say 'Come.'" The Bride calls to the Groom. He's waited for her call, for her thirst to grow. He will not rape her, but He romances her thirst.

Then we read, “Let Him who thirsts come.” Who’s thirsty? The thirsty could be *you*, for the next line is, “Whoever desires let him take the water of life freely.” So the thirsty may be you, but the One *most* thirsty is the Lion—Jesus—God. You drink living water, and Jesus drinks you. You’re thirsty, but He is so thirsty He died for you. He is thirsty for worshipers. Worship is to surrender your heart in love.

If you read The Revelation and memorize every word,
chart and diagram every chapter;
If you read The Revelation and understand every
mystery, explain every paradox;
If you read The Revelation and are visited by revealing
angels;
If you read The Revelation and die with the martyrs on
the street of the Great City
But don’t love Jesus more at the end of the book . . .

It’s worthless; a noisy gong, a clanging symbol.
You’ve read and haven’t heard.

Verse 17: . . . *let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

I am glad that warning is there . . . or this book would have been tamed and trivialized long ago.

Verse 20: *He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

He comes “at once!”—“suddenly!” He is “at hand.” Yes, it’s scary, but like Mr. Beaver said, “Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good.”

He is *The Good*. He’s waiting for you to say, “Come, Lord Jesus” with all your heart. Don’t keep Him in the tomb. Don’t keep Him small. Don’t keep Him trivial. But read The Revelation and hear. Like Eugene Peterson says, “It’s medicine for trivial people like us.”

Read,
Hear,
Worship.

The Revelation is a call to worship, to say, “Come, Lord Jesus!” in faith, hope, and love.

In the early church it was the practice to say, “Maranatha”—“Come, Lord Jesus”—at the Lord’s table. One scholarly theory is that The Revelation was read as a call to worship at the Lord’s

table, for The Revelation ends with “Maranatha.” And The Revelation explains the Lord’s table. It reveals Jesus.

Here the world is judged.
Here the ruler of this world is cast out.
Here He romances all men to Himself (John 12).
Here the saints sing on Mt. Zion.
Here the grapes of wrath are trampled
and the river flows.
Here the Bridegroom enters His Bride with His life.
Here eternity invades time.
Here the Lion and Lamb conquer at the cross.
Here “God reconciles to Himself all things by
making peace through the blood of His
cross.”

“The life is in the blood,” and the river of life flows from the throne, for on the throne sits a bleeding Lamb. He is the Lion, who bleeds for you.

“Eat, oh friends, and drink deeply, oh lovers” (Song of Solomon 5:1).

“Don’t be afraid, Jill. Drink from His stream and you will be drunk by the Lion (He will win your heart).”

“Eat the body and drink the blood, and you will be His body and bleed His blood.”

“Eat, friends, drink and be drunk with love” (Song of Solomon 5:1 NRSV).

That is: Drink and be drunk by God.

On the night the Lion was betrayed, He took the bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way after supper, having given thanks, He held up the cup and said, “This is the new covenant in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you!”

In Jesus’ name, amen.

Hear the Word of the Lord, worship God, and let him who thirsts come. I actually believe that when you do this in faith, He will come. And you may have an ecstatic experience that blows your boots off, or you may lose your job and get crucified, but He is with you. It’s a communion.

And when you breathe your last breath with this old body of yours, may you say, “Maranatha!” . . . and He will. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the last trumpet will sound and you will

be changed. You will have new eyes with which to see. And you will look in absolute wonder back on chronology and say:

My God! It was true! You *were* at hand! I was walking down the road and saw a guy lying in a ditch, and there were festive angels gathered at Mt. Zion singing, 'Pick him up! Pick him up!' The New Jerusalem was here. And when I hung on the cross you were *with* me. And when I walked through the desert you were there. And the whole time you were romancing my thirst for this day. God, why didn't I see it then?

My guess it that if you were to really see it now, you'd just *blow up*. He's preparing you for that day.

Sometimes I actually believe it, because I've had a few weird experiences when I began to see it. Sometimes I actually believe it in my brain, because I've read it in Scripture. There really *is* a host of festive angels, who really *have* come to Mt. Zion, and there really *is* a great cloud of witnesses. Mostly, I really believe it when I *worship*.

So worship God. And let him who thirsts come.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Further Reading

"Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered" -Revelation 5:5

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. -Revelation 22:16-17a

There came a woman of Samar'ia to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." . . . The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samar'ia?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. . . . Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." . . . Jesus said to her, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband' . . . the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

-John 4:7, 9-10, 13-17, 23-26

After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the scripture), "I thirst." A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

-John 19:28-30

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. . . . He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

-Revelation 22:17, 20-21

"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever." This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Caper'na-um. Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before?"

-John 6:54-62

"I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. A little while, and you will see me no more; again a little while, and you will see me."

-John 16:12-16

The people who hanged Christ never accused Him of being a bore; on the contrary, they thought Him too dynamic to be safe. It has been left for later generations to muffle up that shattering personality and surround Him with the atmosphere of tedium. We have very efficiently pared the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified Him "Meek and mild," and recommended Him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies.

-Dorothy Sayers

One so often hears people say, "I just can't handle it," when they reject a biblical image of God as Father, as Mother, as Lord or Judge; God as lover, as angry or jealous, God on a cross. I find this choice of words revealing, however

real the pain they reflect: if we seek a God we can "handle," that will be exactly what we get. A God we can manipulate, suspiciously like ourselves, the wideness of whose mercy we've cut down to size.

-Kathleen Norris from Reaching for the Invisible God

The trivialization in John's world was taking place through the gossip of those whose aberrant teachings would soon be known as gnosticism. The essential nature of gossip is that it talks about people instead of to them. Gossip leaves out all that is unique and glorious in a person and reduces him or her to an anecdote or a cliché or a stereotype. The gossip is never in awe. The gossip is never in love. . . .

As a pastor, John knew he had to help his people disentangle themselves from such gossip or the gospel would be trivialized beyond recognition. . . .

John wasted no time on lament. What he did was worship, and call his people to worship. Just worship. He offered no plan for renewal of the church. He did not call for a convocation of his seven churches to discuss what could be done. He worshiped God and called his people to worship God. . . .

It is telling that our Bible concludes with Revelation, which is to say, with a call to worship. By the time we have come to this final entry in the library of 66 books, our minds are bursting with knowledge and our hearts burning with desire. With all that knowledge and all that desire there is a great danger that we will just run off and put it to good use—tell everybody what we know, enlist everyone in our cause: communicate, motivate.

-Eugene Peterson, Christianity Today, October 28, 1991

God is so much more—more in every way—than we had imagined. Everything within us wants to back away from the danger. And yet, and yet. . . . We can't make ourselves move. We're terrified, to be sure, but there's more delight in the terror than we've ever before experienced. Not able to go forward toward the throne because of the fear, but also not able to move away because of the joy, we do the only thing we can do: we fall to our faces in awe. Only a God who is wholly other *and* wholly other-in-love could inspire such a response.

The trivial gods of our own making do not fill us with reverence. How could they? They remain under our control, subject to our desires, and thus they inspire a good deal of misdirected devotion from a culture in the thrall of scientific methodology, with its zealous dedication to control and explanation.

-Don McCullough, The Trivialization of God

God is not an answer man can give, God says. God himself does not give answers. He gives himself, and into the midst of the whirlwind of his absence gives himself.

-Frederick Buechner, Telling the Truth

"Are you not thirsty?" said the Lion.

I'm *dying* of thirst," said Jill.

"Then drink," said the Lion.

"May I—could I—would you mind going away while I do?" said Jill.

The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl. And as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realized that she might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience.

The delicious rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic.

"Will you promise not to—do anything to me, if I do come?" said Jill.

"I make no promise," said the Lion.

Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer.

"Do you eat girls?" she said.

"I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," said the Lion. It didn't say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

-C. S. Lewis, The Silver Chair

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver. "Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

-C. S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

-Revelation 22:20