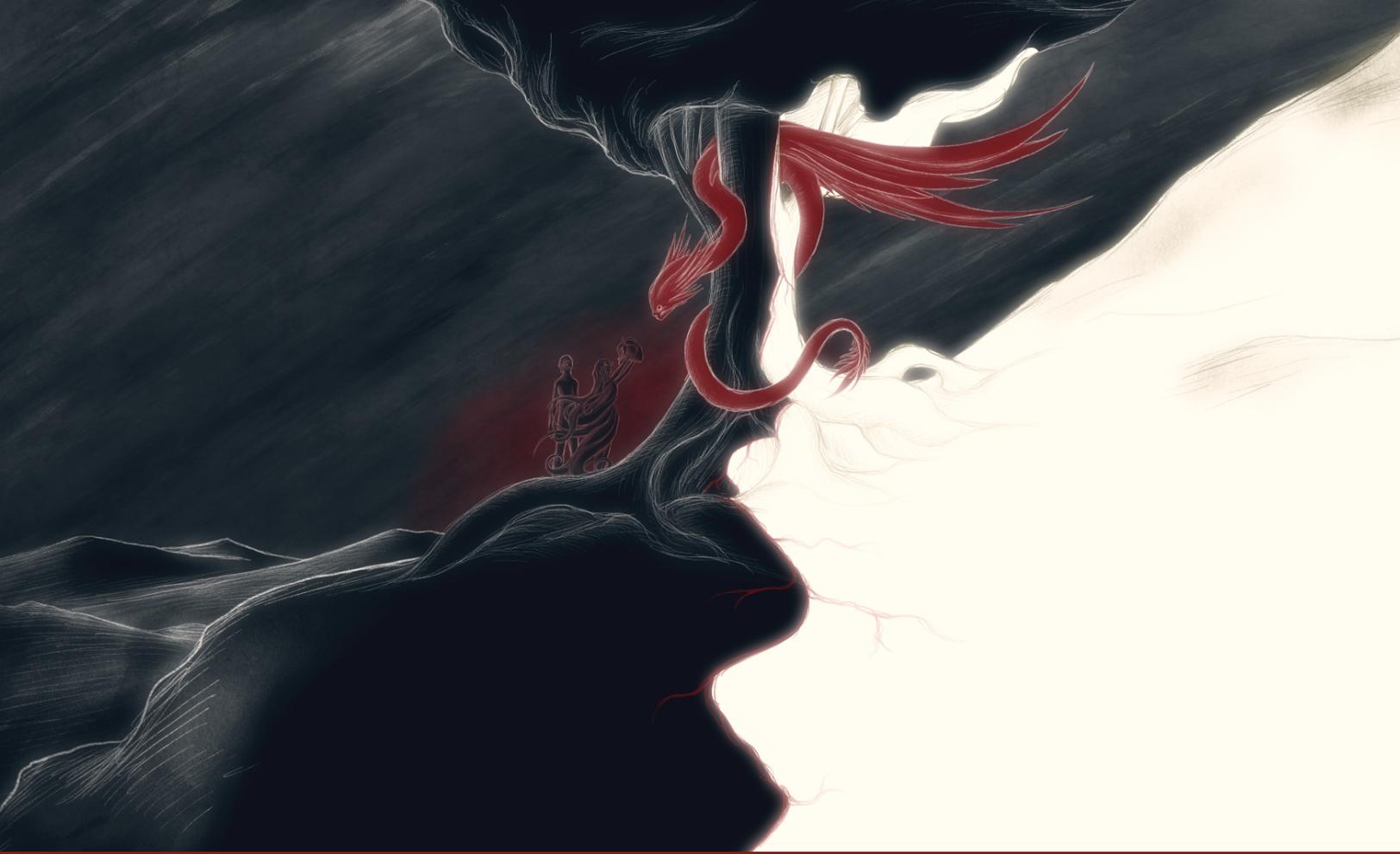


IT IS FINISHED

DISCUSSION GUIDE

This discussion guide is intended to help individuals and small groups press a bit deeper into the issues addressed in *It Is Finished*. My hope is that the comments and questions in this guide will help you understand how the imagery in this animation and the teaching of scripture intersect to highlight the beauty of God in Christ's crucifixion.

Do not feel that you need to discuss every question or each point; they are simply intended to be springboards and suggestions for further thought. May this animation and guide be a means for you to more truly know, love, and be conformed to the glory of God in Christ.



I. DEATH ENTERS THE WORLD

Genesis 1:26-31; Genesis 2:16; Genesis 3

Human beings, like all things, were created by God and for God. This means that the purpose of our existence, and the greatest gladness we are capable of experiencing, is to know and love/enjoy God. Like lungs to air, like eyes to light, like ears to sound, the human creature exists to receive, relish, and resound the beauty of who God is. However, as the first few chapters of Genesis make clear - something has gone wrong.

- 1. As you read over the 3 sections of scripture above, how would you describe the change that we see take place regarding humanity's relationship to God? How was that change depicted in the animation?**
- 2. In Genesis 3 we read about the first sin: choosing fellowship with the serpent over fellowship with God. How are that sin and its effects portrayed in the pictures above and on the following page?**

3. When Adam sinned, not only were he and Eve *physically* separated from God, but their hearts became spiritually cut off from Him. Like a tree after a windstorm, the human heart was “bent” away from God so that, left to itself, it was no longer capable of knowing and loving Him. This “bent heart” is spiritual death; it is the death Adam and Eve died that day, and the death into which every one of us was born. **How was this spiritual death represented in the animation? How about in these pictures? Does anything in this picture indicate a sense of hope?**





II. THE SECOND ADAM

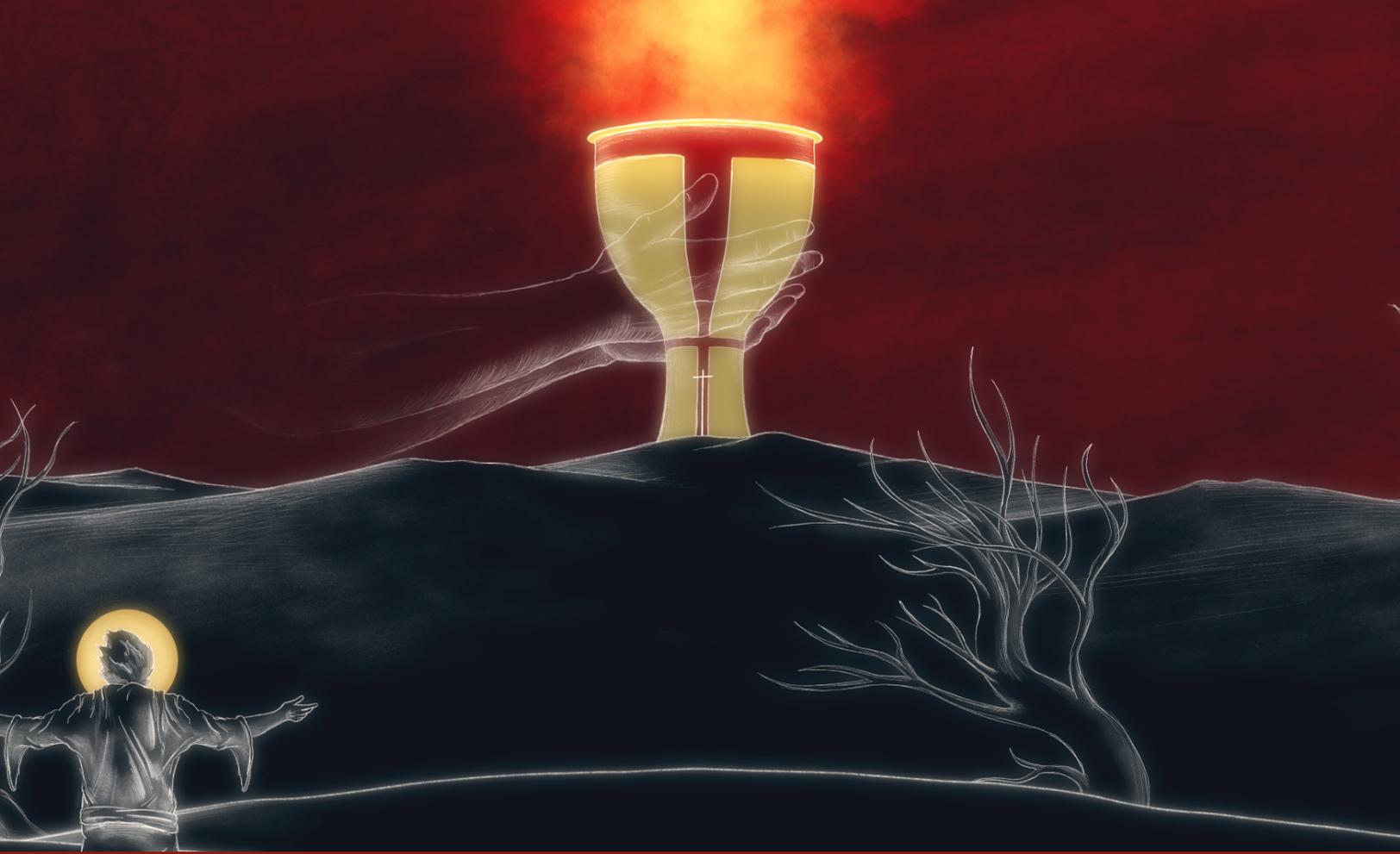
Romans 5:5:18-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22

1. Because Adam was the first person created, he functioned as a “representative head” for all of humanity. This means that, when he sinned and destroyed humanity’s relationship with God, it was destroyed for all of us. **Where do you see this concept taught in the verses from Romans and 1 Corinthians? Who is contrasted with Adam in these verses?**
2. Jesus is sometimes called the “Second Adam” because He comes as the head of a “New Humanity” and undoes the damage that Adam’s sin has caused. **In what ways is Jesus represented as a “Second Adam” in these verses? How are Jesus and Adam compared and contrasted in the animation?**

Adam faced his greatest test in the Garden of Eden. It was there that he was presented with the choice between God and the serpent, Creator and

creature. He chose to turn his back on God and every one of us has felt the sting of that decision in the deepest places of our being. We are shattered and broken souls because of Adam's failure...but also just as much because of our own sin.

However there is a Second Adam, and He also faced His greatest test in a Garden, the Garden of Gethsemane. Your eternity and mine depend on how this Second Adam responded to His own greatest test in this Second Garden, and so we turn now to examine it in more detail for the next section of the discussion guide.



III. YOUR WILL BE DONE

Jeremiah 25:15-16; Matthew 26:36-39

The wrath of God is a weighty subject that demands careful words and thought. We don't have the space to explore it in this study guide, so I hope it will be enough simply to say that God's wrath is His holy anger toward all that opposes Him. There are three key passages in scripture that connect God's wrath to the imagery of a cup. One of them is the section from Jeremiah that you just read; the others are Isaiah 51:17, and Revelation 14:9-10. Because of these verses, and because we know that Jesus absorbs the wrath of God towards humanity on the cross (1 John 2:2, 4:10), we can be confident that the "cup" Jesus refers to in His prayer in Gethsemane is the cup of the Wrath of God.

- 1. Can you imagine something so horrific, so terrifying, so tormenting that it would cause God the Son to fall on His face in prayer? Jesus' anguish in Matthew 26:36-39 is not because of the whips that will soon rake His**

back or the nails that will soon pierce His hands or the death He is about to die, His anguish is because, on the cross, He is going to drain the cup of God's wrath toward His people. Hell itself burns with the fire of God's wrath and *this* is what Jesus would have to swallow in His people's place on the cross. **How is this concept depicted in the picture above?**

- 2. What does Jesus' prayer reveal to us about the deepest desires of His heart? How is His willingness to obey shown in the animation? What do you think the connection between obedience and love might be? (Hint: Read John 14:15, 30-31)**
- 3. In John 14:31, Jesus obeys His Father (which means going to the cross and drinking the cup) *because He loves Him*. Ultimately it is Christ's joy in *love* – love for God the Father, and love for the Church – that drives Him to the cross despite its horror and shame that await Him there. Remember that Jesus is God, and what is true of Him is true of God as well. With that in mind, **what are some things that Jesus' choice to go to the cross teach us about the heart of God?****



IV. CRUCIFYING THE LORD OF GLORY

Isaiah 6:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:6-8; Colossians 1:15-20

1. According to John's gospel, there is good reason to believe that the passage from Isaiah 6 which you just read refers to God the Son, Jesus Christ (John 12:41). With that in mind, **what are some things that Isaiah 6 as well as the verses from 1 Corinthians and Colossians teach us about Jesus?**
2. In the 1 Corinthians 2 we read about the crucifixion of Jesus, and in Colossians 1 it talks about the "blood of His cross." **After reading about Jesus' glory, in what ways do these statements seem surprising? How are these things depicted in the image above? In the rest of the animation?**

3. Based on the Isaiah 6 passage, **why do you think there are two seraphim (angelic beings) watching from the background of this picture? How might their presence in the image serve to highlight the depths of love that Christ displayed in His death?**
4. Even before He was crucified, the Bible tells us that Jesus was mocked, spit on, hit over the head with sticks, beaten with glass-and-bone-tipped strips of leather and had many other terrible things done to Him. **Why do you think people would have been so violent and hateful toward God the Son?**
5. Regardless of what you believe about Jesus, the Bible teaches us that He is God in the flesh. **If you believed this to be true, how do you think you would have responded to Him when He was being crucified? How would you respond to Him right now?**



V. HE WILL NOT CLEAR THE GUILTY

Exodus 34:6-7

In Exodus 34:6-7, we read God's own declaration of His Name ("Name" can also be understood to mean God's "character" or His "glory"). These verses explain to us the essence of who God is in relation to sinful humanity.

- 1. Pastor and theologian John Piper has defined God's righteousness as His "unswerving commitment always to bring his actions into accord with the reality of his infinitely worthy glory." In other words, God is righteous when He acts according to His nature / His character / His glory. If that is true, what element of God's name – as He declares it in Exodus 34:6-7 – seems to make it impossible for Him to withhold punishment from guilty sinners like you and me?**

If part of God's Name is that He "will by no means clear the guilty" then we must ask ourselves how it is that anyone can stand "cleared" and holy in His presence. Every one of us has preferred something more than God, which

means every one of us is guilty of sin. And since God's righteousness (His commitment to act according to His Name) means that He will not clear the guilty – we seem to be without hope

Take a look at Galatians 2:20, Colossians 3:3, and Romans 6:5-11. These verses (and others) teach that, when someone trusts in Jesus as God and Savior, Jesus' death is actually counted as their death. God does not clear the guilty because He punishes them (you and me) in Christ on the cross.

2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 and 1 Peter 2:24. **What happens to our sin in these verses?** Consider your most recent sin....the last time you acted selfishly, or ignored someone in need or failed to love someone when the opportunity was given to you or simply failed to love God with your entire being (which is something we always fall short of)...or think about the darkest thing that you've ever done of thought....if you trust in Christ, HE took these sins and HE bore the punishment in your place...
3. Think back over the animation. **What do you think the color red symbolizes? Why do you think Jesus is drawn with red outlines on the cross?**
4. **In what other ways did you see a representation of Jesus' sin-bearing, wrath-absorbing work in this animation?** No one forced Jesus to do these things. **What do you think His sufferings and death tell us about the heart and character of God?**

Christian, Jesus' died for our sins and was raised for our justification. If you are trusting in Him, His death *was* your death, the punishment is paid. What's more, as you read in 2 Corinthians 5:21, the righteousness of God the Son Himself has been counted to us by faith. He has not just brought our account out of the negative and back to zero, rather He has credited it full to overflowing with the fullness of His own treasury. But being justified by God is only the entrance into the garden of Life. The Christian's righteousness through Christ is like a bride's spotless white wedding dress, and no bride is satisfied with her dress alone; she wants the groom.



VI. BEHOLD YOUR GOD

John 1:14-18, John 17:5, 17:26 ; 2 Corinthians 4:6

Why did Jesus come to earth? One answer might be “to save us from our sins,” and that would be absolutely right. But as I said in the last section, being saved from sin is not the ultimate goal; it is the Church’s “wedding dress,” not her groom. No, if we want to know the central and ultimate purpose for the incarnation of God the Son, we will find it in John 1:18; God the Son came to earth in order to make God known.

Jesus’ incarnation is the climactic declaration of who God is. And since all of reality exists for this same purpose (i.e., to make God known), this communication of God in Christ is not just the purpose of the incarnation, it is the purpose of created reality as a whole. God made known in Christ is why creation exists.

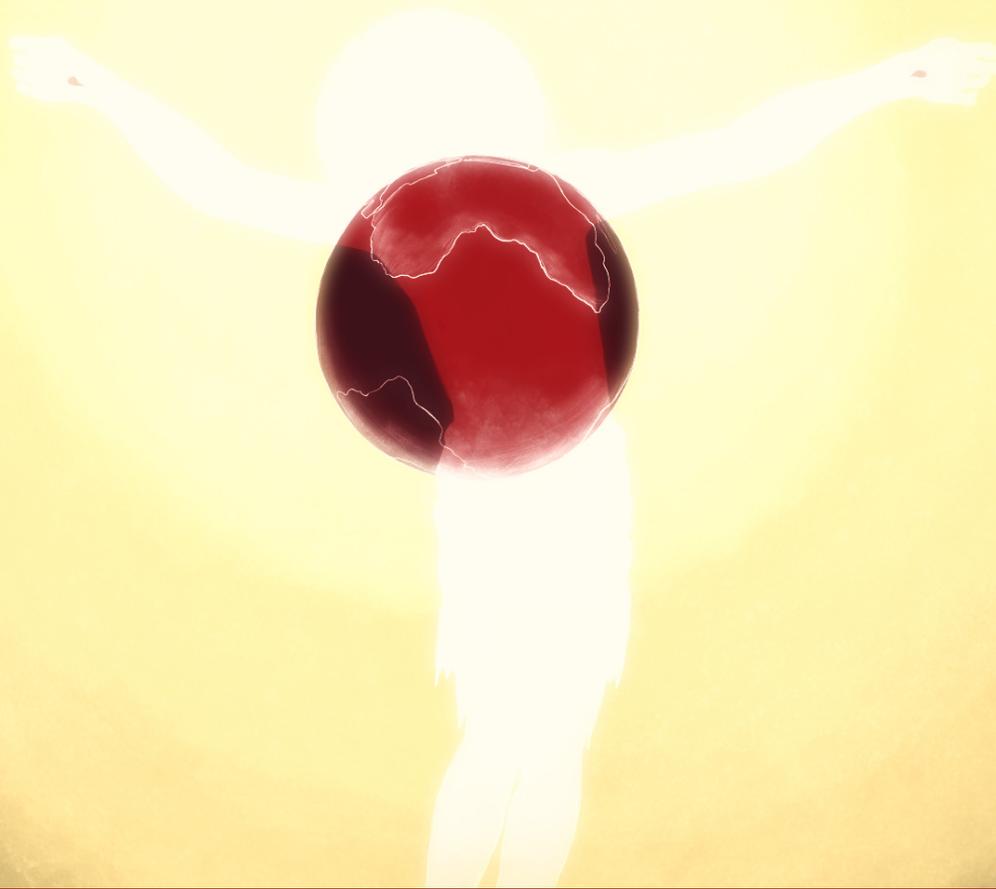
That is an astounding concept, but there is more wonder to see. Though Jesus’ entire life is a declaration of the Name (i.e., the character or the glory)

of God, John's gospel teaches us that the supreme communication of God's glory in the incarnate Christ comes at the crucifixion (John 13:31, 17:5). How can the slaughter of Jesus be the zenith of God's glory on earth? Because by His self-outpouring, wrath-absorbing, substitutionary death on the cross, Jesus manifests love to the uttermost, declaring the Name of God with His entire being.

Where does the light of God's beauty shine the brightest? Is it in His sovereign power as Creator? Is it in His ability to uphold reality with a word? Is it in the weight of His glory that bows angelic hosts in worship? No, not in these things. God's beauty, His character, His identity, is seen with greatest clarity in the self-giving of Jesus Christ on a cross outside Jerusalem. THIS is who God is, THIS is what God is like, THIS is the climactic proclamation of His character.

Remember back to the first section of this study guide. There we said that humans exist to know and love God. To know our Creator and respond to that knowledge with love and joy is the highest purpose and deepest satisfaction of the human soul. But how can we know God? How can rebellious, bent-hearted, dust-born humans know God and so love God and so truly live? Well, now we see how: We know God at the cross.

- 1. Explain in your own words how Jesus' crucifixion is actually the display of God's glory. How is this concept portrayed in the picture above?**
- 2. Re-read Exodus 34:6-7. These verses describe God's identity/name/glory. In what ways does the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus declare this same identity to us?**
- 3. 1 John 4:8 is another description of God's identity / name / glory. In what ways does the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus declare to us that "God is Love?"**



VII. IT IS FINISHED

John 19:30

When Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" certainly part of what He meant was that the sin-made separation between God and His people was overcome. The gash that Adam's sin tore in the fabric of human and divine fellowship was healed when Jesus became the wrath-absorbing, righteousness-giving sacrifice for everyone who would trust in Him. However, Jesus' death and resurrection does not simply enable our renewed communion with God, it also climactically shows us the beauty of the God into whose communion we are called.

I believe that John's Gospel would have us see that the central accomplishment of Jesus' death was the supreme revelation of God's glory to His people. From the very beginning, John tells us that Jesus came as the one who makes the invisible God known (John 1:18). His purpose was to glorify

the Father by perfectly revealing His Name to His people (John 13:21-32, 17:26), and this is work He finishes at the cross.

- 1. How does the death of Jesus overcome the separation between God and humanity caused by Adam's sin? In what ways is this concept displayed in the animation?**
- 2. When you want to know what God is like, where do your mind and heart "look"? I would contend that the primary place we should be looking to know God is to the cross. What are some things the death and resurrection of Jesus tell us about who God is?**
- 3. Why do you think it is important to understand Jesus' death and resurrection as both the act that justifies us in God's sight *and* the act that supremely manifests God to us?**



CONCLUSION

There is no event in all of reality more important than the death and resurrection of God the Son. As we come to the end of this guide, my prayer is that your mind and heart have tasted this reality and found it to be true, good, and beautiful.

Friends, our Creator has not left us to claw our way into His presence by our own strength – and thank goodness for that, we would have more success climbing mount Everest with an anchor tied around our necks. In Adam, all of humanity was utterly cut off from the life of God, but in Jesus Christ God Himself has spanned that chasm of separation. He has come to us. He took the initiative, He bore our sin, He drank our hell, He passed through our death, and we – if we trust in Him – will enter His joy.

And He has not left us to guess at what He is like, wandering in the twilight of our imagination, worshiping gods made in our own image. Rather, He has declared Himself to us through His Son, crucified and risen. Would we know

the heart of God? Would we know the character of the One who sustains reality? Would we know the nature of the one who authors every circumstance (hard and easy, painful and pleasurable, sorrowful and full of joy) in our lives? Then look to Christ crucified in love as He is made known in the pages of scripture. Isaiah's command to "Behold your God" (Isaiah 40:9) is fulfilled at Calvary. This is God, friends, this is God....the one who gives Himself wholly and without reserve to His beloved ones so that they might know Him and live.

Wrath absorbed, sins forgiven, righteousness achieved, fellowship restored, and the God who is Love definitively made known....at the cross of Jesus Christ "it is finished."