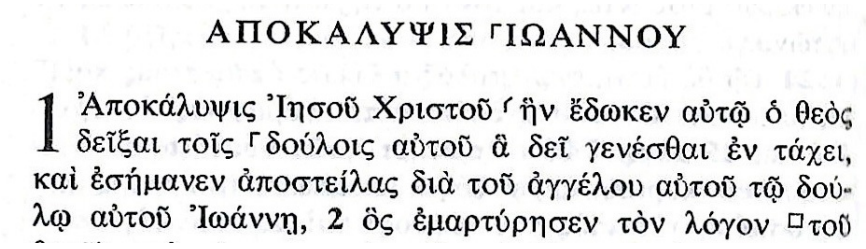
SERMON TAKE-HOME NOTES — February 1, 2026

Is Alex Pretti's murder by federal agents an apocalypse of violence for our nation, like the cross was an apocalypse of violence for St. Paul and the early Christians? Does it reveal the violence for what it is?

In English the word *apocalypse* means:
1. the complete final destruction of the world, as described in the biblical book of Revelation.
2. an event involving destruction or damage on an awesome or catastrophic scale.

But in Greek the word *apokalypsis* simply means *revelation*.



ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ ΓΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ

1 Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννῃ, 2 ὃς ἐμαρτύρησεν τὸν λόγον τοῦ

The title and first verse of the Book of Revelation

The title says, "*apokalypsis* to John," who is receiving the revelation. The first verse says, "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him. . ." — the first word *apokalypsis* signals that the revelation to John is from Jesus Christ, who received it from God.

In short: In the Bible, *apocalypse* is not an *event* of mass destruction. It's *not* the end of the world. In the Bible, apocalypse is the *revelation* of the *violence* of human nationalistic reigns, in contrast to the loving, nonviolent reign of God. The Book of Revelation shows this contrast in terms of strange creatures: the lamb slain since the foundation of the world (Jesus!) vs the beast and dragons representing empires like Rome.

Why is it so important that apocalypse is a revelation and not an event? Because God who graciously respects our freedom is all about giving us a *choice*. Prophets aren't so much about predicting future events that we are locked into. Prophets *reveal* to us the violent path we're on so that we might choose God's way of peace and justice.

All of today's readings are apocalyptic in this sense of revelation:
- Micah 6:1-8 — human beings evolved with us believing that the gods require the violence of ritual blood sacrifice. Micah says, "No! What God truly requires is for us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God." Our violent ways are *revealed* in contrast with God's just and loving ways. Many of the Hebrew prophets say this for centuries. Jesus fulfills it. All disciples of Jesus immediately cease ritual blood sacrifice to instead practice Holy Communion.
- 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 — God's loving justice in the cross *reveals* the contrast to human ways. What looks like weakness and folly to human beings is God's power and wisdom. St. Paul himself had a dramatic conversion in which he went from persecuting Christians, thinking that was justice, to being an apostle for Jesus, the crucified Messiah. He chose God's way of peace over his former violence.
- Matthew 5 — The climax of this chapter will be world-changing contrasts: "You've heard, 'An eye for an eye,' but I tell you, 'Turn the other cheek.' You've heard, 'Love friends, hate enemies,' but I tell you, 'Love your enemies.'" Jesus begins this chapter with an in-your-face contrast of values. He reveals true justice as blessing those who are usually left out of blessing in our human reigns. This whole chapter is a remarkable revelation of the contrast between the values and practices of God's reign and those of human nationalistic reigns. Which will we choose? Once again, it's up to us.

Siblings in Christ, are we seeing the revelation of that choice in clear ways these past couple weeks? With the murder of Alex Pretti, the violence of the federal agents are becoming more clear. The violence of Christian Nationalist politics are being revealed. And aren't the people of Minnesota beautifully living God's loving ways of being in community? I heard one of the protestors says, "Our neighbors here in Minneapolis are from all around the world. We're showing up for our neighbors. They're trying to stop us. But we're here in love. To show love for our neighbors." I believe that once again God is revealing to us a clear choice. The violent politics of typical nationalistic human regimes, or the loving politics of God's reign. Will we choose the bloody sacrifice of citizens like Alex Pretti, or the Holy Communion of lovingly helping the most vulnerable of our neighbors, like the good people of Minneapolis? The choice is ours. Rivers of blood or to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. For the sake of people like Renee Good, Alex Pretti, Liam Ramos, and so many terrorized and brutalized by our current government, let us choose well.