

“BELOVED, BROKEN AND BEAUTIFUL”

Living a Life of Cruciform Love in a Broken World

- October 22nd 2023 -



THE CRUCIFORM LIFE

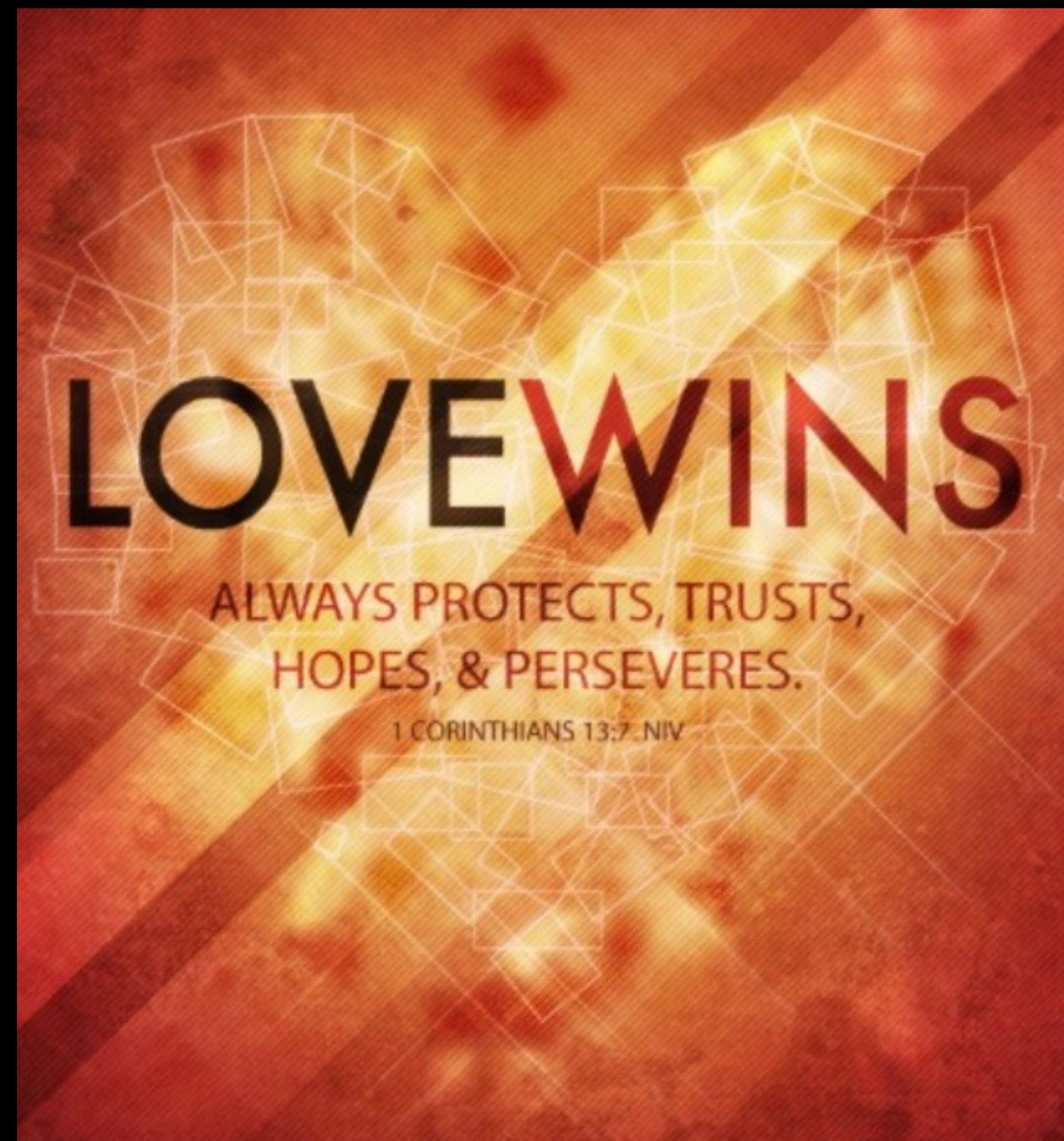
GOD'S LOVE WINS

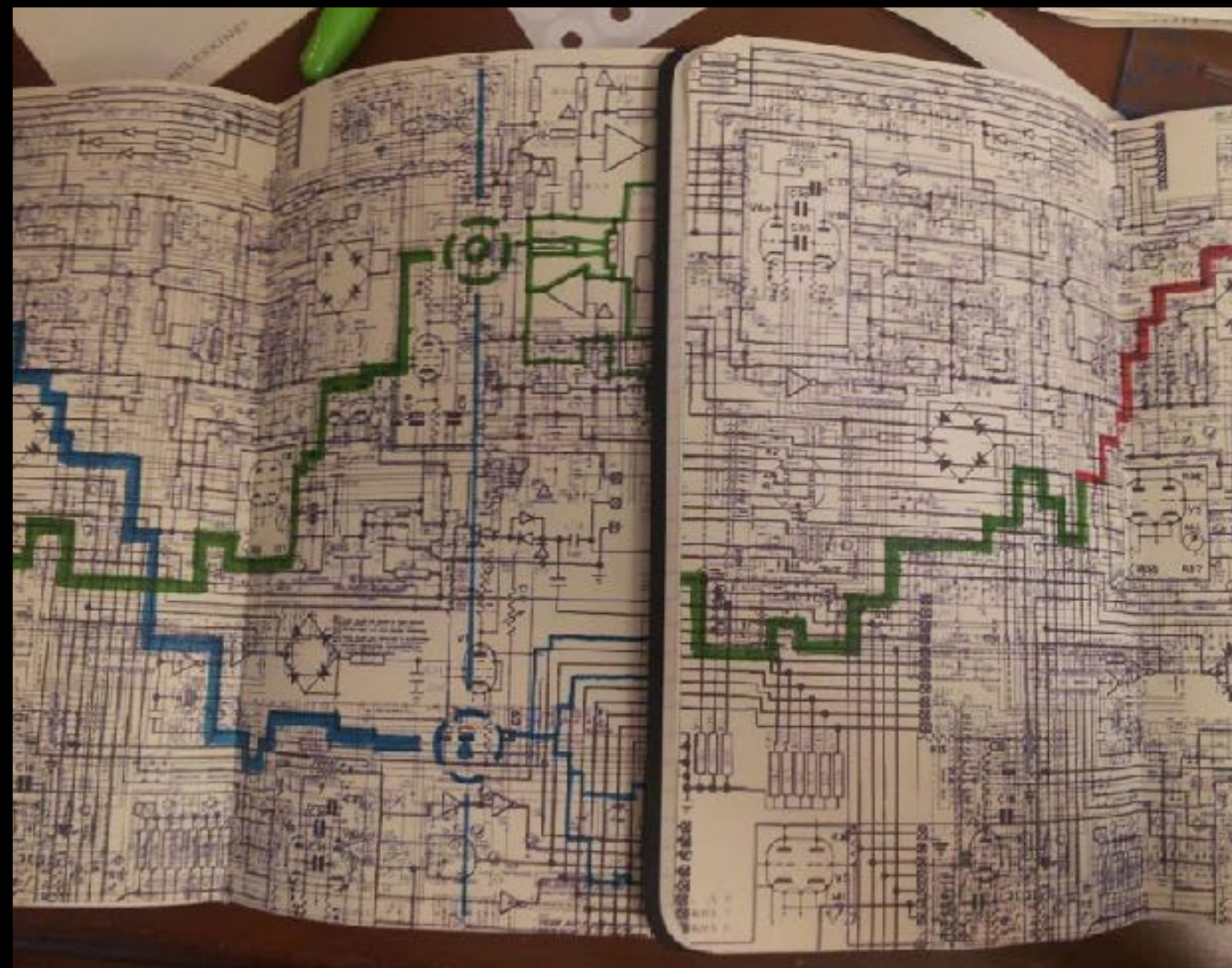
Does it REALLY?

If God's *Love Wins*, what might 'winning' look like?
What's required of us?

Why does winning Jesus' way take so long?

How does one move from merely spectating to willingly participating in God's recreative Love?





**THEN HE OPENED
THEIR MINDS SO THEY
COULD UNDERSTAND
THE SCRIPTURES.**

LUKE 24:45

“Faith is like the eye – it does not create what it sees; it sees what is already there”.

- Martin Luther

Selections from Habakkuk Chapters 1-3

Habakkuk's First Complaint

² How long, O Lord, must I call for help? But you do not listen! “Violence is everywhere!” I cry, but you do not come to save. ³ Must I forever see these evil deeds? Why must I watch all this misery? Wherever I look, I see destruction and violence...

Habakkuk's Second Complaint

¹² O Lord my God, my Holy One, you who are eternal—surely you do not plan to wipe us out? O Lord, our Rock, you have sent these Babylonians to correct us, to punish us for our many sins. ¹³ But you are pure and cannot stand the sight of evil. Will you wink at their treachery? Should you be silent while the wicked swallow up people more righteous than they? ¹⁴ Are we only fish to be caught and killed?

- NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

Selections from Habakkuk Chapters 1-3

Hab 2: The Lord's Second Reply

² How Then the Lord said to me... ³ If the vision is delayed, wait patiently, for it will surely come and not delay. ⁴ I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away. But the righteous person will live by **my faith**...

¹³ O Has not the Lord of Heaven's Armies promised that the wealth of nations will turn to ashes? They work so hard, but all in vain!

¹⁴ For as the waters fill the sea, the earth will be filled with an awareness of the glory of the Lord.

- NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

Hab 3: Habakkuk's Prayer

Selections from Habakkuk Chapters 1-3

¹ This prayer was sung by the prophet Habakkuk: ² I have heard all about you, Lord. I am filled with awe by your amazing works. In this time of our deep need, help us again as you did in years gone by. And in your anger, remember your mercy...

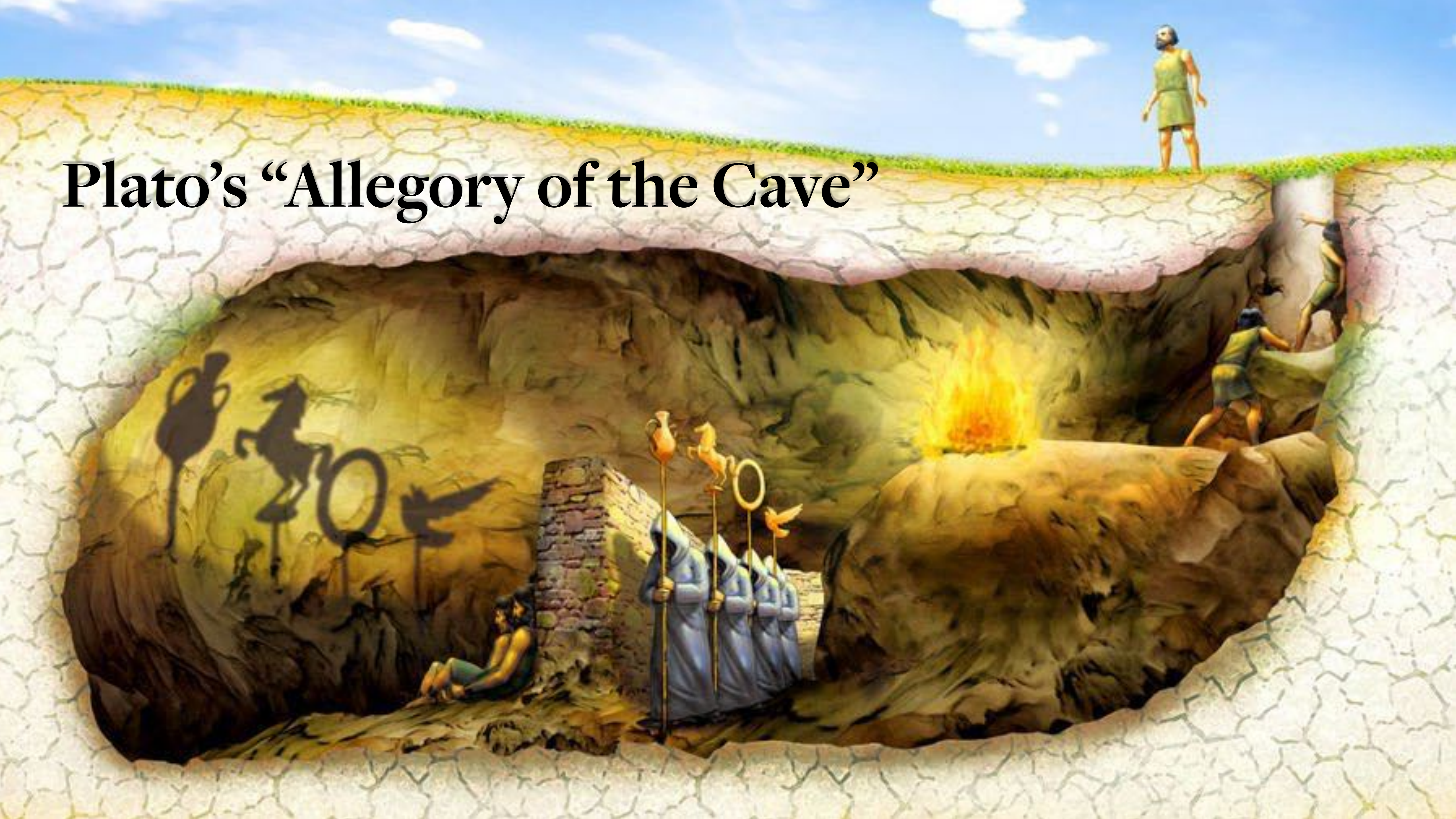
¹³ You went out to rescue your chosen people, to save your anointed ones. You crushed the heads of the wicked and stripped their bones from head to toe. ¹⁴ With his own weapons, you destroyed the chief of those who rushed out like a whirlwind, thinking Israel would be easy prey...

¹⁷ Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, ¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! ¹⁹ The Sovereign Lord is my strength! He makes me as surefooted as a deer, able to tread upon the heights.”

A close-up photograph of a bird's eye, showing a black pupil and a highly iridescent iris with vibrant colors including purple, blue, green, yellow, and red. The eye is surrounded by white feathers and long, dark eyelashes.

WE DON'T SEE THINGS
AS THEY ARE, WE SEE
THEM AS WE ARE.

Plato's "Allegory of the Cave"





Are we locked into seeing an 'Old Testament' shadow of God's nature instead of the one revealed to us definitively in Jesus?

(Heb 10:1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves.)



“Expand our thoughts until they are worthy...
of God’s own glorious self-revelation”

- St. Hilary of Poitiers (310-367)

The Uncontrolling Love of God

“The model of God as essentially kenotic (i.e. self-giving, unending love poured out) says God’s eternal nature is uncontrolling love. Because of love, God necessarily provides freedom/agency to creatures, and God works by empowering and inspiring creation toward well-being. God also necessarily upholds the regularities (i.e. dynamics) of the universe because those regularities derive from God’s eternal nature of love.”

— Thomas Jay Oord
“THE UNCONTROLLING LOVE OF GOD”



THIS
IS HOW
LOVE
WINS...

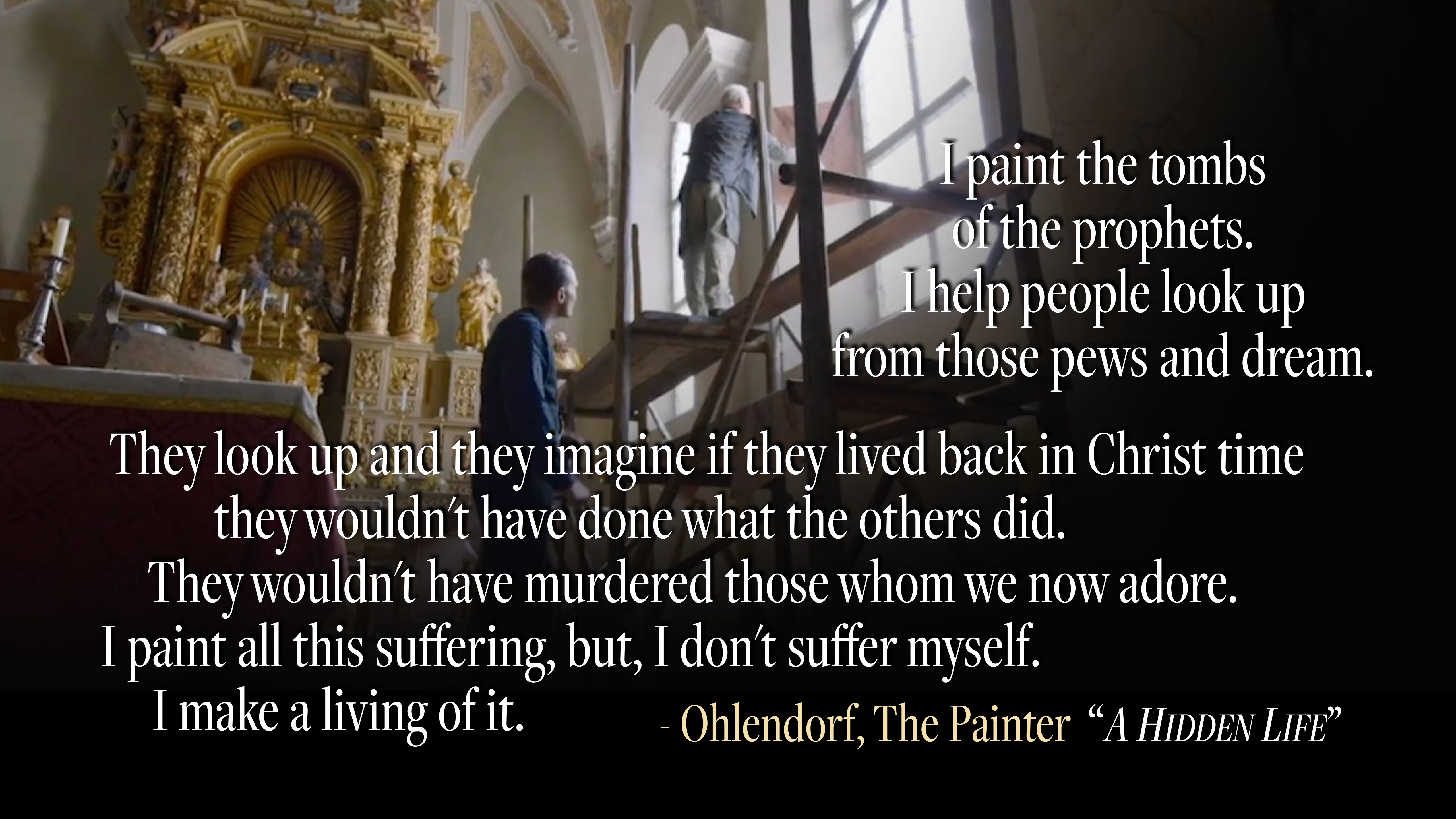


A wide-angle shot of a lush green wheat field stretching towards a hill. In the distance, a small white building with a tower is visible on the crest of the hill. The sky is a clear, deep blue. The overall mood is serene and peaceful.

A Hidden Life

(to play "*A HIDDEN LIFE*" movie trailer & clip, click link below)

<https://vimeopro.com/user2890445/inspiring-music-and-videos/video/872606599>



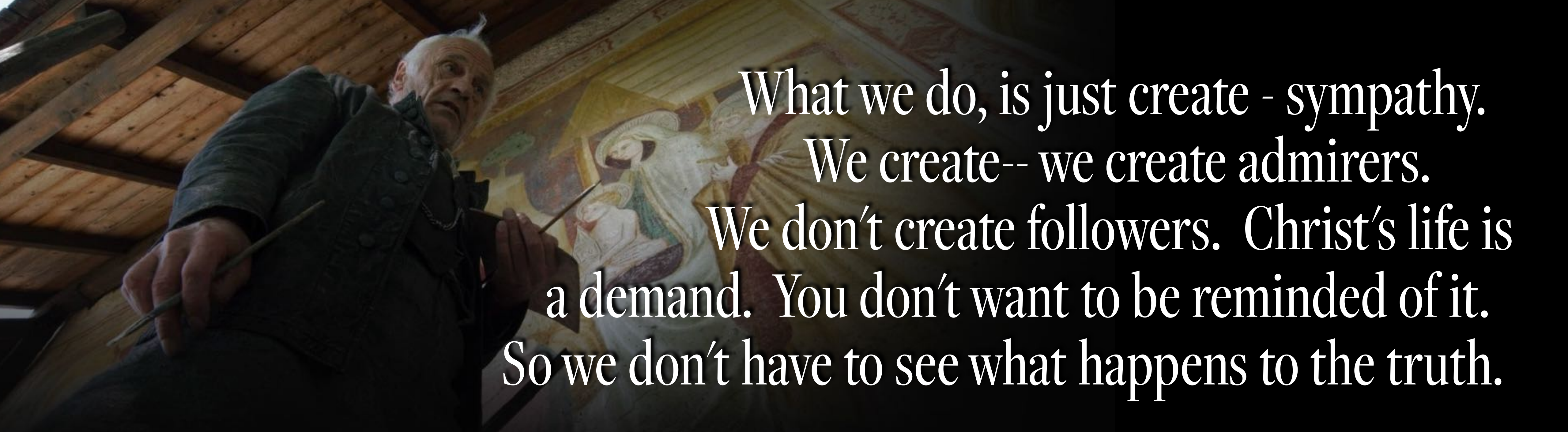
I paint the tombs
of the prophets.
I help people look up
from those pews and dream.

They look up and they imagine if they lived back in Christ time
they wouldn't have done what the others did.

They wouldn't have murdered those whom we now adore.
I paint all this suffering, but, I don't suffer myself.

I make a living of it.

- Ohlendorf, *The Painter* "A HIDDEN LIFE"



What we do, is just create - sympathy.

We create-- we create admirers.

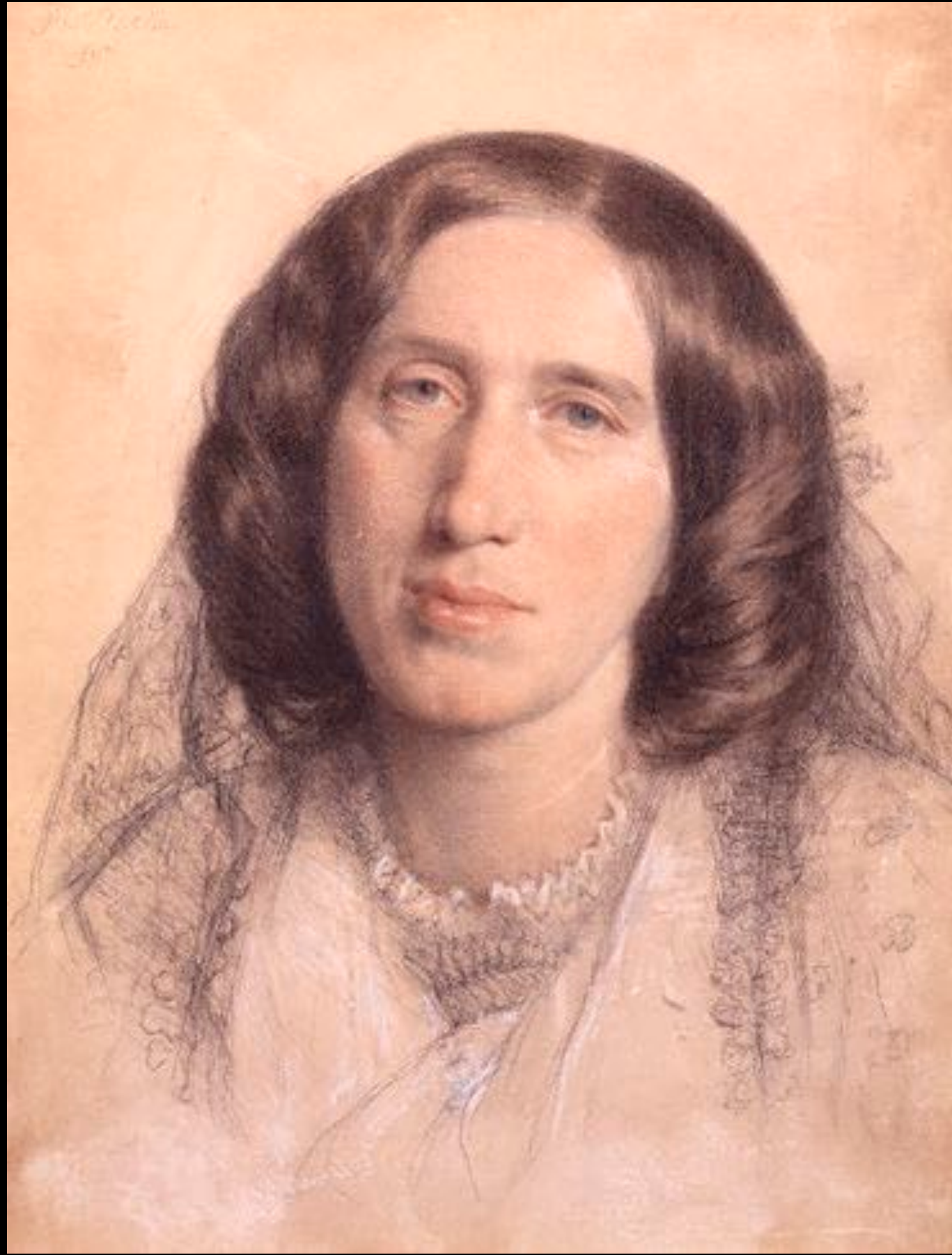
We don't create followers. Christ's life is a demand. You don't want to be reminded of it. So we don't have to see what happens to the truth.

A darker time is coming - when men will be more clever. They won't fight the truth, they'll just ignore it. I paint their comfortable Christ, with a halo over his head. **How can I show what I haven't lived?**

Someday I might have the courage to venture, not yet.

Someday I'll - I'll paint the true Christ.

- Ohlendorf, The Painter "*A HIDDEN LIFE*"



In the last line of *MIDDLEMARCH*, George Eliot (the pen name of Mary Ann Evans 1819-1880) offers a reflection on the life of Dorothea Brooke, whose sense of obligation led her to dutifully serve the dry scholarship of her husband Casaubon. But it was her overflowing creativity and passion, her idealism and cultural activism that made a difference in the world —

Effecting social change through “a quiet poetics of participation” enacted in the small and intimate moments of everyday life in which an idea or vision is turned to practical politics:



“The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts...
And that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been,
is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life,
and rest in unvisited tombs.”

— George Eliot, *MIDDLEMARCH*
(aka Mary Ann Evans, 1819-1880)



BEAUTY AND WONDER BEYOND WORDS

THE DIVINE DILEMMA:

How does Trinity reveal and share Their infinite Love and relational Glory with us as blind, broken and often faithless human beings?

Some... celestial event. No - no words. No words to describe it.

Poetry... They should have sent... a poet.

So beautiful. Beautiful. So beautiful. So beautiful...

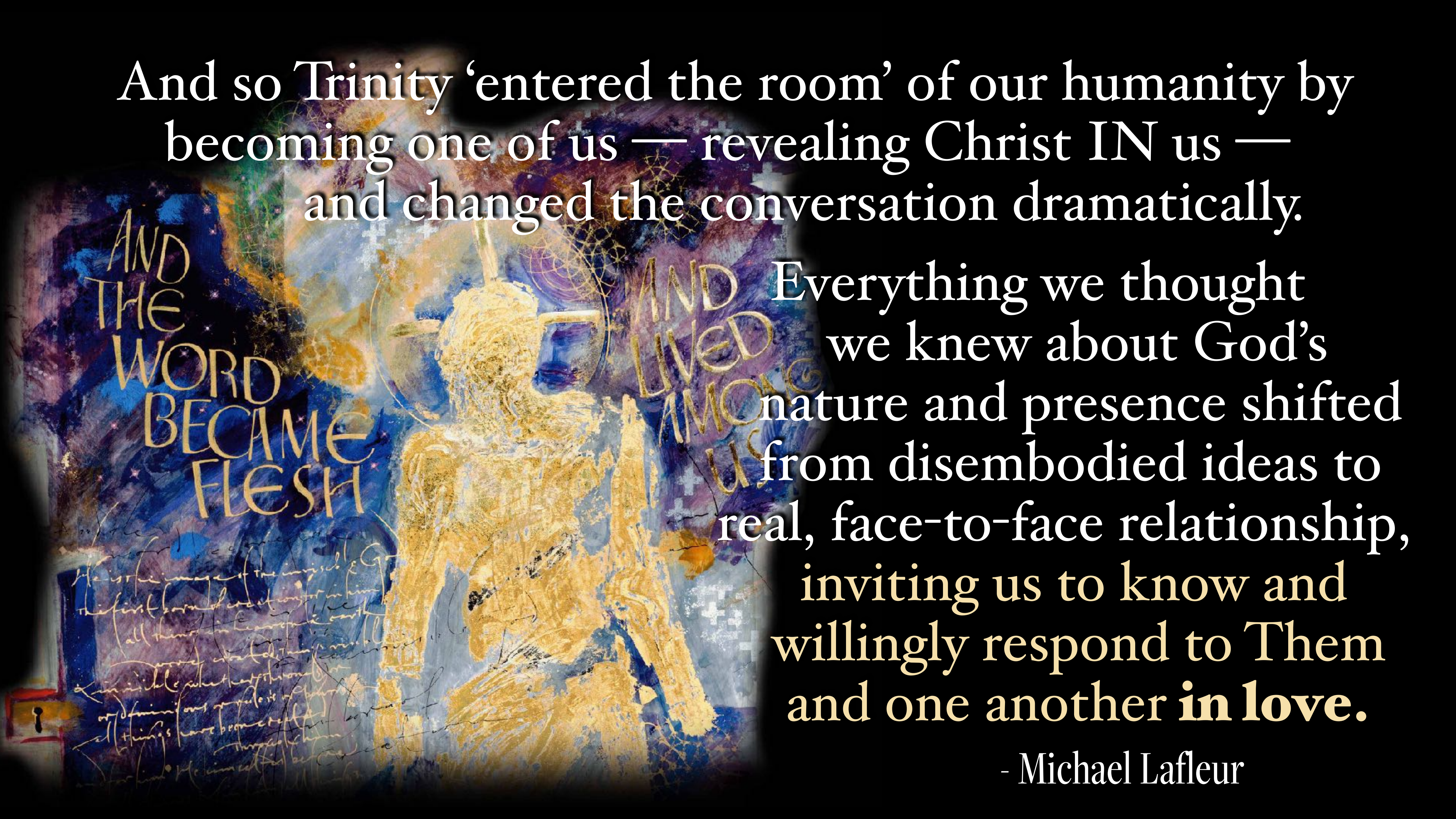
I had no idea. I had... no idea. I had no idea. I had no idea. I had no idea. I had no idea...

**BY BECOMING ONE OF US
AND FULLY ENTERING INTO
OUR HUMANITY JUST AS
WE ARE AND REVEALING
CHRIST IN US.**

And so Trinity 'entered the room' of our humanity by becoming one of us — revealing Christ IN us — and changed the conversation dramatically.

Everything we thought we knew about God's nature and presence shifted from disembodied ideas to real, face-to-face relationship, inviting us to know and willingly respond to Them and one another **in love.**

- Michael Lafleur



“BELOVED, BROKEN AND BEAUTIFUL”

Living a Life of Cruciform Love in a Broken World

HIS WORDS

**...IN THIS WORLD YOU
WILL HAVE TROUBLE.
BUT TAKE HEART! I HAVE
OVERCOME THE WORLD.**

JOHN 16:33, NIV



THIS
IS HOW
LOVE
WINS...



Excerpt from The Paschal Sermon of St. John Chrysostom (347-407)

O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns. Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be glory and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen.

I'm fighting a battle You've already won

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No matter what comes my way

(to play "*YOU'VE ALREADY WON*" lyric worship video, click link below)
<https://vimeopro.com/user2890445/inspiring-music-and-videos/video/872904082>

“...Faith does not create union with Christ; faith is believing the union is true, which leads into ever increasing freedom to experience Jesus himself and his Father in the Holy Spirit.

Faith is seeing with Jesus' eyes and learning to agree with him in trust, and thus share in his peace and hope and joy...

The Son of God in his union with us summons us in the Spirit to believe, to trust, to weep in the hope of his presence in us, to let go of our assumptions and illusions and share life with him in the Spirit's delight and in the unearthly assurance of our Father's steadfast love.

This is the fight of faith, a fight between the believing of Jesus Christ himself and our own believing.”

- Baxter Kruger



Beholding and Becoming

As we REFLECT on the true nature of God's being revealed in Jesus Christ as self-giving, radically forgiving, co-suffering Love, we begin to REALIZE who we are as those created in and sustained by Trinity before we were born and became 'religious'. As we RECOGNIZE that God's healing and forgiveness precedes our REPENTANCE, we are set free to enjoy eternal life and embody self-giving, radically forgiving, and co-suffering love to others.

Behold, the


Lamb of God,

who takes
away the sin
of the world!

John 1:29

Beholding and Becoming: Journey with Jesus in John

Beholding the Truth of your Being in Christ
Becoming Fully Alive in the Way of your Being in the World



“Behold the Lamb of God
who takes away the sin
of the world”

- John 1:29

John 1:29 Notes from the Mirror Bible - Francois Du Toit

29 The next day John saw Jesus approaching him, and declared:

“Behold the Lamb of God; this is the one who would lift the sin of the cosmos like an anchor from the sea floor, for humanity to sail free!”

(This is unheard of! It is not about a revengeful god demanding a sacrifice; this is your Father and Creator providing himself as sacrifice. The ultimate sacrifice for sins would never be something we did, or brought to God to appeal to him; the shocking scandal of the cross is the fact that mankind is confronted with the extravagant, embarrassing proportions of the love of their Maker; Father Son and Spirit would go to the most ridiculous extreme to finally convince us of their heart towards us!)

The Greek word is **ἰδοῦ**: an middle imperative “See, behold, look”
eidon = “to see” — implying not the mere act of looking,
but the actual perception of the object.

“The nuances of the original NT Greek here imply that
we participate in the beholding in such a way that – with the
help of the Spirit’s empowering presence – as we continue to
heed the imperative, we enable ourselves to see more and more:
compounding and creating within us a deeper apprehension of
the essential TRUTH of our being, made in the image of God
to refract the truth of Trinity’s loving nature as unique persons,
and maturing in the WAY of our being as the Spirit transforms
us to willingly embody Their sacred presence in all of life...”



*I am the vine,
you are the branches.*

IF YOU REMAIN IN ME AND I IN YOU,
YOU WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT. JOHN 15:5

“Our beholding is inextricably linked to the summons in John 15 *“to abide”* in Christ, as branches in the True Vine, that we might indwell and be indwelt by Divine Love as fruitful disciples, enjoying everything Jesus shares with the Father as our own.”

- Michael Lafleur, R&R Church Nov. 2020



Abide
in **ME**

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.
Now make yourselves intimately at home in my love”
- John 15:9



*"This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased;
listen to Him!" Matthew 17:5*

ABIDING: Becoming Willing Participants in our Transformation
Beholding Jesus face to face and **Believing** what He knows to be true
about His Father actually **Belongs** to us as the truth of our being.

[from Brad Jersak's new book *IN: Incarnation & Inclusion, Abba & Lamb*]

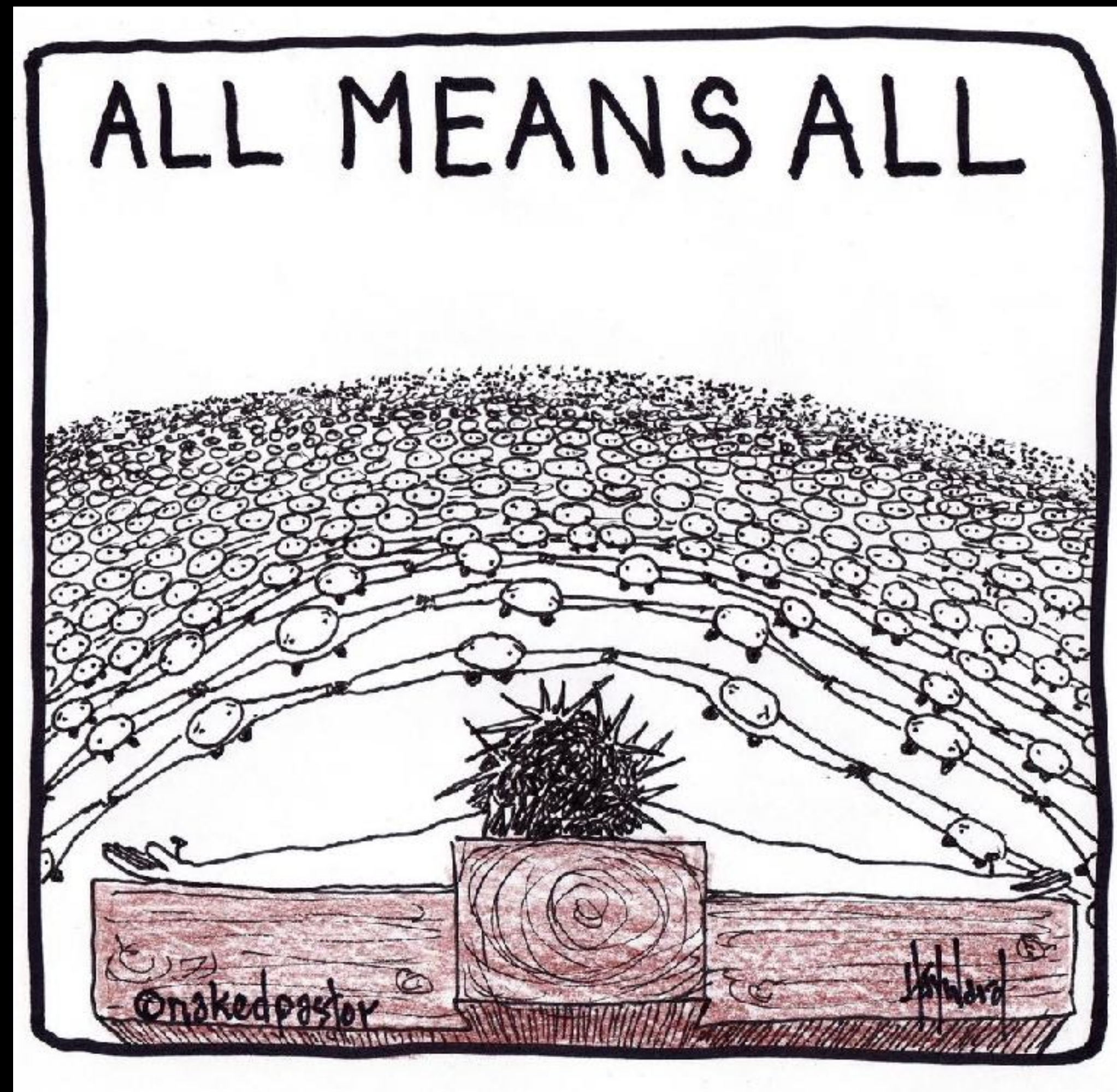
“Through his Incarnation, Christ reconciled us to Abba, he united and reunited humanity and Trinity in his Person. On the Cross,

Christ tore open the curtain **for all Abba's children**, granting everyone, everywhere complete access to Abba's house now and forevermore. That's our inheritance.

But who is “our”?
Only Christians, right?

“And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.”

- John 12:32 NLT



[from Brad Jersak's new book *"IN: Incarnation & Inclusion, Abba & Lamb"*]

That's not what we've heard from Paul. Here's Paul:
As in Adam, Paradise was lost for all; so in Christ, Paradise is reopened for all.

But not everyone knows this. Exactly.

That's why John Wesley became an evangelist!

That's the astounding Good News
that Christ commissioned his
apostles to share!

That's the feast to which his
servants invite and compel
everyone to attend. The message
is, "You're included! You're IN!
So please, come on IN!"



Life is a Relational Adventure of Faith with our Trinitarian God

1. Dynamically Unfolding in a World Infused with Divine Love;
2. Empathetically Shared with us through Jesus' Co-suffering Love;
3. Designed for Face-to-Face Intimacy and Deepening Mutuality;
4. Enjoyed as Eternal Life Now Inside Jesus' Humanity
as our True Home;
5. United by Christ as Diverse and Equal Members of
One Human Family;
6. Filled with Jesus' Spirit to Set Things Right
by the Way of Love for the Well-being of All.

- Michael Lafleur

