

Lamb power (Revelation 7:9-17; John 10:22-30)

Just when victory should be a show of power, the vulnerable lamb appears, standing as if slain.

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Revelation can be a terrifying book of the Bible to encounter in the Easter season. We usually think about it as a doom and gloom kind of book. That is until a child, bleating like a sheep, reminds us what it is all about.

Barbara Rossing, in her 2004 book *The Rapture Exposed*, introduces a term for the power at the center of God's throne: lamb power. It's a subversive kind of power that negates the exploitative power that the Roman Empire claims as part of its victory propaganda. Just when victory should be a show of power, the vulnerable lamb appears, standing as if slain.

One Sunday, my children's sermon introduced this term "lamb power" to the kids. We talked about the vulnerable, powerful, painful, and joyous imaginative love of Revelation's lamb, standing as slain in the middle of the heavenly throne room. We talked about the idea that power in our world doesn't always need to look like the shiny, unavailable, completely impervious central figure of a king. I had the kids stand like superheroes, hands on their hips, and proclaim lamb power as the way God wants us to live.

I told them that for the rest of worship, anytime they heard “lamb power,” they should stand up and repeat it. I had purposefully sprinkled the phrase throughout the rest of the liturgy.

And, being kids, most of them did exactly that. During the prayers of the people: “lamb power!” During the offertory prayer and again during the Eucharistic prayer: “lamb power!” It was delightful!

I had forgotten, however, what we sing just before the distribution of communion: “Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world. Grant us peace.” In the fullness of the silence after the music stopped, as the adults contemplated the mystery of bread and wine turned to body and blood, one child—who had declined to participate during the children’s sermon—started bleating. Loudly. Next a cascade of joyful smiles and giggles, starting with me, rippled into the gathering and continued as we shared communion.

In the gospel reading this week, we hear a familiar and reassuring reminder of Jesus’ role as our shepherd: “My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.” We are assured that Jesus’ voice is a clear beacon to follow. We are assured that Jesus knows us. But how? Does Jesus know our voice? That Sunday three years ago answered these questions for me. Jesus hears us and knows us in the bleating of a child, the giggles as we gather around the table, and the joyful experience of life as a flock. That’s lamb power.