

The Coming of the Lord

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. Good morning. Wow. We've had a big few weeks. We had baptisms last week, which was super, super fun. And then, of course, Darren and Ziwe yesterday. We're going to jump straight in and carry on with one Thessalonians. We have some guests here. Darren, Ziwe, your family. Welcome. It was just so good to be able to celebrate with you guys. You must be so, so proud. So just really glad that you're here. And maybe just for your sake and anyone else who isn't usually part of our gathering. We've been going through the book of Thessalonians.

This church that Paul is writing to, maybe he started two years ago. And then he started this church and then he got run out of town. And so he writes this letter two years in to probably a group of around this size. And he just loves this church. And he's saying, I'm so proud of you. I was so worried when I left. But now I'm hearing such good things. So you guys are the model church. I'm hearing about your work of faith, your labor of love and your steadfastness of hope is what he's saying. And he's saying everyone else is hearing about it too.

And the question that I asked us a few weeks ago was, well, who are you modeling your life after? Or rather, if someone was to model their life after you, Trevor, would they start to look more like Christ?

And that was a convicting message. Because if someone followed me around and lived the way that I lived and read this book the way that I read and prayed to him the way that I prayed, would they be more like Christ? And I've still been modeling that question because I'm not entirely sure, but I hope they do.

And then he goes into chapter two and then he says, hey, you guys are doing so well, but I know. And I'm hearing that there are some people who are talking some smack about me, who are trying to basically distract you and discourage you from this church.

[1:39] And I just want to remind you, you know me. Don't listen to those things outside about what they're saying about me. You know me. You know what I was like when I was with you and how I was working hard.

And it wasn't for my own selfish gain. So remember that. And that week, do you remember when I got my accountability group up and we talked about what accountability means? What being a leader, what are the dangers of being a leader?

And I had my guys come up and shared things about me to you because we need accountability. That's what we needed. And then he goes, hey, so you are the model church.

You know my motives as a leader. And then he said, hey, you guys sat here. You guys gathering in this kind of church. I know that it comes at a cost. I know there are dangers or rather the moment people know that you are following this guy called Jesus or what they would have called that you are followers of the way.

They will mistreat you. They will leave you out of parties. They will pull out of business deals because of who they know that you're identifying with. And he says, stay in there. Hang in there.

[2:39] And then last week, he starts to go into this different part, which is what Paul always does after he drops theological bombs. He then says, this is how you will live. Do you remember what I said? During that time in the Greco-Roman culture, the way they even perceived sex was different.

But the unlimited rights that a man had and how and I said, hey, imagine, imagine a man walks in here who was living by that kind of way.

And then he meets Jesus and then he sits and he goes, man, I've got to change the way that I live. I can't go to the brothel anymore. I can't go to my mistress anymore. I can't have all these things anymore. I've got to live in a different kind of way.

What does that look like? And last week, we had the uncomfortable time of having your pastor talk to you about sex. And then he continues into this week. Because last week, we said, since the beginning of time, the chief end of humanity has been to seek pleasure, to do things that make you feel good.

But we start to realize that doesn't actually end up helping us feel good. And we realize that actually we need to choose another way. And that's where the catechism comes in and says, actually, the chief end of humanity should be to glorify God and to enjoy him forevermore.

[3:52] And I encourage those all to actually have a higher view of sex. Saying, actually, the topless bars and the pornography is actually not talking about sex enough.

The beauty of sex, what it's supposed to be for. And Paul's taking them and going, hey, look, it is so much more than that. You are made in the image of God. Sex is for procreation and for pleasure.

Don't sell sex short, is what he says.

And then he moves on to the second part here. And so if last week was about sex, this week is about something else. It's actually about death. Which is, again, not really my choice sermon to preach.

Especially on a weekend that has so many festivities. But alas, this is the word of God. And I truly believe, as we prayed in the morning, and I think it was Nathan that prayed. This word, God breathed this word out to us.

And I truly believe there is something that he wants to say to all of us here about the issue of death. Yesterday for the wedding, we had the pleasure of having Trevor do the scripture reading for the ceremony.

[4:52] And it just made me think, I think we might be neglecting one of his gifts of being a public reader. So I'm going to invite you, Trevor, to come back up to read the word of God to us.

As is our custom, we believe, man, this word is so packed and so powerful. So much more better than anything I will say. So we remind ourselves by that by reading it. And we stand in reverence and in awe of this word.

So I can invite you to stand. We're going to read this from here to here. Oh, no, sorry. Here, sorry. But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

[6:05] Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.

Therefore, encourage one another with these words. Lord, we hang on every word that you say. We believe this book has the words of life.

So we empty our minds of anything that isn't of you. And we ask that you would speak this morning.

Thank you, Lord. In your name we pray. Amen. Please take a seat. So last week was, your perspective on life will determine how you live.

The way you perceive life, and what it's really for, the purpose of it, will then dictate how you live. And the man who walked into that church, who now has to change his ways, how he treats women, how he perceives women, that is it.

And maybe then, just off the back of that, this week is actually, how you perceive death, will determine how you live. So imagine that guy's coming in and going, he has to rethink his whole life.

[7:05] The context here, and he says this, but we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers. So he's saying, and this is really what the purpose of teaching is about, as people walk into a church, and they're choosing this new way of life, there are so many questions.

Now that I'm a follower of Christ, am I allowed to do this? Am I allowed to do that? Am I allowed to eat pork? Am I allowed to go here? And those are these kind of questions. And the context here is, during this time, now there was talk, hey, this Jesus that we're following, he's going to come back again.

He's coming back again. And so let's just wait. Let's just pray, and be expecting for him to come back. And of course, something about any kind of community filled with people, is that there is

death.

So people start passing away, and then people go, wait, wait, you said Jesus is coming back, and he's coming to collect us. But now, but now, Kevin is gone.

What about Kevin? What about Susan? And so they're asking, well, in this new way, what do we even think about death? You told us Jesus is coming back, and we'll be around to see him, but now, my son is gone.

[8:13] Where's he going to go? And so those are the questions that are happening. And so, Paul knows this, and he's saying, I don't want you to be uninformed. I want you to know about what happens, or really, what is death?

This morning, I was having breakfast with Ruben and Alicia, and Ruben asked me, what are you talking about today? And I said, death. And she was like, Solomon said, that one of the only certainties in life, is death.

I was like, say what? Solomon said, I was like, wait, wait, wait, like, tell me more. Where did you get that from? Well, the Action Bible is where I got it from.

I was like, oh, that is so cool. Well, not the, not the certain death part, but just the fact that you know that. And I was like, she was like, is that in your Bible, dad? I was like, I think so.

But I'm going to have to find out. So then I get my, not my Bible, I get my phone out and Google. Where did Solomon say that? And of course, it's Ecclesiastes, right? He says, everything is meaningless. And then chapter nine, he says, death comes for us all.

[9:16] So, so whilst we're giggling and smiling, let me just maybe turn it a little bit morbid right now. Every single person here, do you think about this? I do. Every single person here in this room has death in their future.

I look around at all of you, all of those of you who are really good looking and those of you who are not. I look and I go, man, we're all going to die.

You're going to die. You're going to die. We're all going to die. Every single person, you know, you will either go to their funeral or they will go to yours.

Isn't that morbid? Isn't that sad? It makes me think, what is your perspective on death? Do you think, put your hand up if you think about death fairly regularly.

I've told you, I do. Anyone else? Something. It's just something that's kind of there. But really, our perspective on death is what's going to then determine how we're going to live.

[10:19] And you see Paul here, and I'm grateful for him to do this, because actually, this passage is one of my favorite passages. Because he says, I don't want you to be uninformed. Because we don't grieve like others do.

Because we grieve in a way that has hope. So I want to split this message into two parts. The first part is, I want to talk about death, and I want to ask you what your relationship with death is like.

So when I say death, what's the next word that comes to mind for you? Aaron, when I say death, what's the next word that comes to mind for you?

Freedom. Right now, freedom. Freedom. That is so good. When I say death, what is the next word that comes to mind for you, Annabelle?

Life. Life. When I say death, Rocky, what is the next word that comes into your mind? Nothing.

[11:25] Nothing. Nothing. The words of every man since the beginning of the... What's going on in your head, honey? Nothing. It's interesting.

When it comes to death. We need to be a people who look at death differently. And I've joked about this regularly. The Chinese culture is terrified of death.

Everything is about death. Everything is about death. I mean, that is the ultimate fear, right? And anything else, we link in to death. When we're trying to describe something to an extreme level, we use the word death.

I see what's going on in your head. Heart, say that. No, say that. Everything is about death. But yet, Paul's saying here is, can we be a people that look at death differently?

That we look at it and say, it means freedom. That we go completely counter-cultural and say, death actually means life. What does that even mean?

[12:33] You see, he carries on here. So if you're following me, and please do if you have your Bible, 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 13 is where we began. But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

That you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. That you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. The first thing I want to show you here is that he says, in this passage from verse 13 to verse 15, he uses the word asleep three times to describe death.

So people are asking, hey, what about my son who died? What about my mom who has died? What's going to happen there when Jesus comes back? What's going to happen to them? And within three lines, three sentences, he goes, they're asleep.

So maybe just that's the first distinction we need to make as Christians when we look at something like death, we go, actually, death is simply as going to sleep. There is not a finality about it that maybe the world has.

That death has been described as a door. And that's really all it is. And so he's saying, hey, look at it differently. When we're thinking about death, it's because we're looking at it in a way where we still have hope, where actually we believe death is not the end.

[13:49] The question then is why? Peter says, hey, be ready at any moment to give reason to explain the hope that you have. Why is that? And then he goes into the next verse here.

Verse 14. So that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. Verse 14. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again. That Jesus basically took the horror of death and removed it. So we, when we die, we fall asleep. But that's because he died and went to the extreme, utter horror of death.

The utter separation that he experienced from God. And he took it so that death now for us is merely just a door. It's just temporary. Now note here, he says in three times that for us, when we die, we fall asleep.

But for Jesus, when he died, he died. And there's a difference. Because Jesus did experience the actual separation and he bore the full horror of death.

[14:52] This is where we go into 1 Corinthians 15. Paul's saying, the thing of first importance, the utmost important thing, why we're all gathered here. Maybe we could put it up as a mission statement, but it would really scare people, especially newcomers.

We are gathered here because someone died. It's essentially what this faith is about. And it's the first importance, he's saying.

He's not everything else. It's not even about the teaching. Why do you go to church? Why do you want your son to be a Christian? Oh, because he'll be a good person. Because he'll be kind and he'll be studious and then he'll become a doctor and he'll earn lots of money. No, we gather, we want people to be Christians because someone died, no full stop yet, and then they rose again. That's it. We follow Jesus not because he's a great teacher, though he was a great teacher. We follow Jesus because he died and rose again. Tim Keller says this. If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said.

If he didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching, but whether or not he rose from the dead.

[16:01] That's it. Because what we believe is Jesus, the son of God, came to life here on earth and then he faced death and then he conquered death so that we wouldn't have to face it anymore because then he comes back from the grave.

That's why we're here. Did you think about that this morning? Why am I going to church? Man, because Jesus died, defeated my greatest fear, and then he came back to life. And that changes everything.

And that's why I'm coming to church. As we're on Tim Keller, he always had this quote that I think he quoted multiple times about another pastor called Donald Barnhouse who, as a pastor, he lost his wife and the story goes, I think he was either driving to his wife's funeral or he was driving from and he was consoling his youngest child.

He was consoling his youngest child in the car and then as they were driving, they see a truck. And so he turns to his child and says, do you see the truck? And the child says, yes, I see that truck.

Do you see the shadow of that truck? Yes, dad, I see the shadow of the truck. And then he asks the question, would you rather be hit by the truck or by the shadow of the truck?

[17:18] And of course the child says, well, I'd much rather be hit by the shadow of the truck. And then he says, Jesus was hit by the truth of death so your mother only had to go through the shadow of it.

That Jesus was hit by the truth of death so that your mother would only have to be hit by the shadow. And that's why Psalm 23 is so powerful.

That line that Coolio quotes, even though I walked through the valley of the shadow of death. It's beautiful.

Thank you, Grace. I can do the whole song. Don't you, I don't think you realize how good that verse is.

Even though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you're not walking through the valley of death. You're walking through the shadow of death. I'm okay with being hit by a shadow.

[18:16] It won't hurt. Because it's not real death. And so I can walk through, I don't even need to run through it, I don't need to hide it. I can just walk through because it's just a shadow.

I would much rather be hit by the shadow. And you know, there are such great men that have gone before us, and women, who have just completely changed the way I perceive death.

George Herbert says this, death used to be an executioner, but the gospel has made him just a gardener. Death used to be an executioner, but the gospel has made him just a gardener.

D.L. Moody says this, just before he was about to die, pretty soon you're going to hear that Dwight Moody is dead. Don't you believe it? I'll be better than I've ever been before. Don't you want that kind of faith?

If you're someone who's worried about death, as someone who is worried about death, wouldn't it be nice to have that kind of faith? Don't you believe it? When you hear that I've died, James is not dead.

[19:18] He'll be better than he's ever been before. Tim Keller himself said, just before he died, there is no downside for me leaving. Not in the slightest. There is no downside.

His mentor, Martin Lloyd-Jones, says this, Christians need to die well. Death is not something to slip past. It should be victorious. We should not avoid it.

We should not slip past it. Christians should die well because of what we believe. Reminds me of the Apostle Paul when he says in Philippians 1, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

To live in the flesh means fruitful labor for me. Yet which shall I choose? I cannot tell. I am hard-pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ because that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. I want that perspective on death because it changes the way I perceive and live life.

[20:18] And so at this point, I'm actually going to invite someone up, someone who's very dear to me, someone who I've carried for the whole of his life. And it's my brother. So can we invite my brother up here?

Because if you know about my brother and about me, we do share the same parents even though it's just such a shock to me when I look at him that we share the same parents.

We've experienced death. I think by the end of our teen years, at least my teen years, we'd lost all four of our grandparents. And of course, the story that I know that many of you have heard share is that we lost our dad when I was 17 and he was 14.

And it was actually on his 14th birthday that happened November the 1st, which was only a week or two ago. And of course, those of you who also know that day, November 1st, is very special.

It was his birthday. Then became dad's departing day. And then just a few years ago, it became his wedding day. So man, that day is a special day.

[21:21] And those of you who also know Joe, he works for Hope International, which is Danny is representing right there with the hat. That's his full-time job. But he actually has a part-time gig on the side that not very many people know about, which is actually he goes and helps out in a lot of funerals.

And he's said often that he prefers funerals to weddings, which is actually what scripture says too. Solomon says that too. Solomon. Solomon's a wise man.

He is a wise man, apart from the concubines at the end. But I'm going to give some time to Joe now to share a little bit about his thoughts when it comes to death. Because I think it's formed him and who he is.

So anyway, Joe, over to you. Thank you, James. Thank you, thank you. For those who don't know, we are from England. There's also another pair of brothers in England. They're princes.

And we also have the similar hairstyle. You can guess who's who. And... Sorry, I had to just start with that. James.

[22:28] So yeah, I walked through the valley of the shadow of death, as James said, on my 14th birthday. So how many of you, I mean, the teens are in the class, but 13 years old, do you remember what it was like?

Your life is just very much about you. Everything is centered up. For me, it was basketball. It was school, basketball, try to have, get girlfriends. Still trying now. I've got my wife.

I win. Tick. But 13 years old, everything I was thinking about was so small. And on a birthday, it was a very simple meal. It was James, myself, mom and dad.

We just got back from Hong Kong. We had a vacation there for a week. And we were also jet lagged. Well, let's just have our birthday meal at home. And so we sat at home and we had a simple dinner.

And I don't remember which part of the dinner, but it was just such a sudden moment when my dad's eyes just closed. He just tilted his head back, fell to the floor, and that was it.

[23:27] And you've got to imagine, as a 13-year-old, you're thinking, what on earth just happened? Did he choke? Did he... So the doctor said it was actually a sudden death syndrome.

So the heart just stopped. It was just like a fuse. Someone just pulled it out and it was gone. And for me, that began a journey of death. Of what it means to live a life that, you know, death is very much in my thoughts all the time.

Every birthday that comes around is very much in my thoughts. Last week was my wedding anniversary. Alex and I, we celebrated three years. And as James said, it was a day of birth.

It's my birthday. It's a day of death. And it's a day of love. And what I've learned, really to sum it up and I think very quickly, is I found that love conquers death and death brings life.

It's just as simple. The three live in unison. Love conquers death and death can bring life. So for me, I learned early on that death is something that's inevitable. It happens to all of us. It's like love.

[24:32] It's all around us. We have no control on the day we were born. We have no control on the day we die. So sometimes it makes me wonder why we think we have any control of any of the days in between. And so I live by this verse in Psalm 90, verse 12.

It says, Lord, teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom. It doesn't make death any easier.

Death is hard. It's so hard. And it's hard for everyone. And you see that in the movies. It's hard for the gangsters, the bad guys. It's hard for the good guys. It's hard for no matter which side you're on. It's the great equalizer. It doesn't matter if you're the richest man in the world. It doesn't matter if you're the poorest man in the world. We all end up in that same place. And I grew up in England with lots of multicultural friends.

My best friends to this day are Muslim and Hindu. And honestly, I talk to them about death all the time. The Muslims, they don't have the best news. They're crossing their fingers.

[25:32] I talk to my Hindu and Buddhist friends. They don't know either. We met the Dalai Lama together. Even he said, we don't know. I don't know where. I'm going to come back. I don't know where. I'm going to come back. Maybe I'll come back as a frog.

Atheists as well, those who don't believe in a God, they don't have any hope against death. Death is, as Rocky said, nothing. And so all of us, in some way, we numb ourselves, we distract ourselves with the pleasures of this world.

We try to avoid this topic. But I truly believe, guys, as Christians, we need to lean in. We need to, this is our go-to topic. This is not just a place where we have good news. This is a place where we have phenomenally good news.

Phenomenally good news. And sometimes I wonder whether we're not sharing this good news because we don't really realize how bad the bad news is. And I pray that none of you need to go to that place where you realize, man, at the end of a funeral when there's nothing, when there's no hope, that is one of the worst places you can be.

And I've been in so many funerals. I'd get to do two to three a month. And there's so many times that I'm just like, God, they are so desperate for good news. And here I am holding on to this phenomenal news.

[26:35] How can I not share? How can I not tell them that there is hope? There is hope beyond the grave, that death is not the end. It may feel like the end at the funeral, but it is not the end.

Occasionally, after the funeral, we'd go to the crematorium and we'd have a line up, usually. There's someone before in the room that they're doing the burial. Usually, it's a Taoist funeral.

And for those who've been, has anyone been to a banyikun or a Taoist funeral? They see the priest. So I'm standing there with my black suit, holding my Bible and a cross. And they come out. They come out with a whole caravan of stuff. They come out in his white costume. He's got his hat. They've got money, fake money, fake Teslas, fake iPhones that they were just burning. They have come out with this big incense and everyone who leaves the funeral has to jump over it and then walk around it.

So many rituals, so many things, so many things that in a way we do as well to just think and comprehend and grasp death. But for us, it's simple. It's just book and a cross.

[27 : 36] It's a cross that we wear in our hearts, a cross that symbolizes that love has conquered death. And because of that, death can bring life. And so, back to my wedding day.

Even just last week at the anniversary, I remember asking James and Christina, hey, can you send me some pictures of dad? Because I was 13. Honestly, even as a 13-year-old, my memories of dad is fading away.

Actually, Christina may have more memories of my dad than I do. And I asked them to send me some more pictures just so I can reminisce and remember and reflect. And then this fall hit me. Every week that passes, yes, my memory of my dad fades.

In reality, when I zoom out, every week that passes is a week closer to seeing him. And so, as I walk and live out this good news, this phenomenal good news, I get to see that, yes, on one side, I mourn my dad who passed away on my birthday, but at the same time, how lucky, how blessed I am to have had 14 years of an incredible dad.

That fact that we have something to mourn is a gift in itself. The person who created us, you know, death and life came from the same hands. And so, we cannot lose the bigger picture.

[28 : 52] We cannot lose it. And I encourage you all today, let us all learn as a community, teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom. And finally, Mark Twain, the author has a great saying, is there's two most important days of your life, the day you're born and the day you find out why.

And everyone here, I think we know why. And that's why we're here this morning. And the third day I encourage us all, as we mentioned it yesterday at Darren and Zira's wedding, is that day.

That day where we get to see him face to face. Just as dad was eating his dinner with us, I think we read the Bible every day as a family, just to think that for one second he was eating with us and the next second he was eating with Jesus himself.

That teleportation, it's better than any Marvel universe or multiverse from one moment to the other. We're reading the Psalms that day together, the next moment he's hearing Jesus read the Psalm in his very words to him.

So to end on a lighter note, eternity is real. Eternity is as real as James is bold. We can grasp it, we can see it, we can touch it. And I pray that every time you see James that will be a reminder that eternity is coming.

[30 : 08] It's real. So let's live like there is an eternity, okay? Amen? Alright, thank you James. Thank you. It's always the same lack of creativity joke that we have here.

Okay, so you get the message, death. Well, last week we said from the beginning of the chapter the Lord is an avenger. This week we're saying death is inevitable. Death is inevitable.

But is that really all that message is about? Is that really what Paul is saying? Hey guys, hang in there, y'all gonna die. No, he's not. He's saying, hey, I don't want you to be uninformed because I don't want you to grieve as those who have no hope.

Because you might go, okay, well fine, every person that I've ever loved that I still love is going to die and will die, including myself. But man, that grief, that hurt.

What am I supposed to do with that? Am I supposed to fake it and just kind of keep the smile?

Because Jesus came alive, but that doesn't really, that's not what it's saying here. He's saying, do not grieve as those who have no hope.

[31 : 11] What he's also saying is that you can grieve. You can grieve. You can feel the loss. And maybe there's no better place to see that in John 11 where Jesus has a friend, a close friend, Lazarus, who dies.

And we know that very soon Jesus is going to do something pretty crazy. Right? He's going to bring him back to life. He's going to say, Lazarus, wake up.

And he does. But what happens before that? What's Jesus' first response? What does Jesus do first? Weeps. He cries.

Have you thought about that? Just think about that now for a second. He's about to do something completely crazy that will blow everyone's mind. He doesn't need to be sad, really.

Because in 10 minutes, it'll be a different place. But he cries. Why? Why does Jesus still cry? Why? I think he cries.

[32 : 17] Because he's angry. I think he cries because he realizes and he knows this is not how it's supposed to be. Death was not supposed to be part of this picture.

What's supposed to be here? When his father created the garden, it was not supposed to be there. Death is an intruder. He's angry because death has come into this world when it wasn't supposed to be in this world.

And so when we grieve, we grieve because we know that this isn't how it's supposed to be. But then we grieve with hope.

Because then he shows us there's something more here. When we grieve, we can grieve. And we can go, that is not how it's supposed to be. Yesterday, I was with a group of friends talking about the next generation.

and that's the thing. Young people are growing up and you're grieving because you look at the world, you look at the leaders of the world, maybe the leaders of the free world and you're going, what is going on?

[33 : 22] That is not how it's supposed to be. You look at how we're treating the planet and you're like, that is not how it's supposed to be. You're looking at how we're treating other people and we're going, that is not how it's supposed to be.

And so to that, I say grieve and grieve away. lean into it because that really, it truly is the gospel message as well, that hey, there is bad news.

These things are happening. The people that we love are dying and so let us grieve. But let us grieve with hope because we believe that Jesus died and rose again.

Even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. We can hate death. Jesus hated death. And that was John 11 and then John 16, just before he goes to confront death, he says, I'm going to turn your sorrow into joy.

I'm going to turn my sorrow into joy because I'm going to do something that no one's ever done before. And I'm going to show once and for all, I'm going to clean out everything that the enemy puts into this creation and I'm going to deal with it and I'm going to pay for it.

[34 : 35] I'm going to turn things around and then I'm going to come back again. And in Revelation 21, we see this, we see this new heaven and this new earth that is coming.

And it says, there will be a new heaven and a new earth, there will be a new Jerusalem and he will be with his people and he will dwell with his people. We will finally be together because he took the separation from God for us so that we can then be with God.

And I can just imagine this being in a movie as those words come out from Revelation 21 and he will be with his people and he will dwell with his people and I can just see the film. The film director can do this for me one day maybe and it will just rewind just the history of mankind and all the brokenness and all the pain and all the sickness and all the death and he will rewind it all and at one point we'll get back to the Garden of Eden again where we can dwell with him because Jesus addressed and redeemed the story.

That's why I can still grieve but I can grieve with hope because I know that Jesus is coming back to restore that.

C.S. Lewis says this if you are really a product of a materialistic universe how is it that you don't feel at home there? Do fish complain of the sea for being wet?

[35 : 52] Or if they did would that fact itself not strongly suggest that they had not always been or would not always be purely aquatic creatures? Why are we continually shocked and repulsed by death unless indeed something in us is not temporal?

Why are we so shocked and repulsed every time? Why are we so angry every time? It's because it was never supposed to be. But we're okay with that right now.

When we were praying this morning in pre-service prayer there was drilling happening and I was like oh my goodness I mean that's part of living in Hong Kong as well and I was like oh my goodness and then I thought oh you know what I've got to be okay with this because that is us living

here on this planet in this earth that God is making all things new and in the meantime there will be some drilling but one day this new city is coming we weren't made for this place and as my daughter quoted Ecclesiastes he planted eternity into the heart of man knowing very well that death would come for us all that's the crux of our hope in this one Thessalonians passage is that the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command and with the voice of an archangel with the sound of the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ will rise then we who are alive who are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air so that we will always be with the Lord therefore encourage one another with these words reminds me of Hebrews 10 when it says don't stop meeting don't stop meeting keep stirring each other up in love and good works and encourage each other as the day draws near that's why we're here because someone died and someone rose again and in the meantime we need encouragement that's what we're here doing and that's what I hope even this message even this morbid message of you will die can leave you lifted as you deal with friends who have passed away children who have passed away parents who have passed away you can still be lifted you can still be lifted because of this the fact that there is an empty tomb remains unchanged and that fact changes everything the fact that there is an empty tomb remains unchanged and that fact changes everything so maybe that question that I asked you at the beginning about your perspective on death is what determines how you live maybe that's not really the right question maybe it is what's your perspective on the resurrection because that will change how you live the fact that someone died and rose again will change how you deal with your boss how you deal with heartache how you deal with uncertainty how you deal with loss how you deal with death let us be a people of hope knowing that he is here but maybe I'll finish with this how do we encourage one another if you're grieving you're like hey James I get it death is inevitable

I can still grieve but what does that even look like how do we encourage one another like this and I'll just quickly share with you three final thoughts about this the first is lean in lean in when you feel that hurt don't run away don't find something to try and take your mind off it to comfort you or to distract lean into it I'm sure Jesus wept Jesus sobbed when his friend died and he knew he was going to raise him back to life again lean in to it and just go that's okay oh I feel pain I feel pain that that person is not here anymore I feel pain as I walk into a room and I see something that my best friend would have totally seen and we would have looked at each other and we would have a little giggle without even speaking I feel pain that that friend is not here anymore and that's okay because feeling that pain is part of being human lean into it the second is as a community can we be willing to listen can we be willing to listen to each other because once we're aware of that pain and we lean into it we should also share it can we be a community when we know that something's happening look it can be death but it can also just be a bad week can we be aware enough and caring enough to look at each other and go okay you've had a bad week can you just share with me I want to listen I'm not here to provide solutions I just want to lean in with you in an ideal perfect world we can be that for each other every time any of us have any kind of trouble we can be that person for each other but I also recognize that many of us don't feel equipped man when someone else loses a loved one I don't know what to say by the way that's usually how I start I don't know what to say can I just sit here with you can I just listen can you tell me stories about your friend so I can know a little bit let us lean into it ourselves but then let us listen to each other and if we need more then we need more then we go and seek help then we seek counseling then we seek therapists let us not be afraid of going to that place where we can share it with each other and finally look so you lean you listen and then you look not to each other here but you encourage each other to look up there to look to the new city to look to the future and go hey this sucks right now and I'm with you it totally sucks that drilling is so annoying but let us look why don't we look together look to him

[41:54] I'm going to invite Gracie and the team to come back to lead us in a song and I don't know where you're at I don't know what you're grieving over I don't know what really hurts you as your pastor I wish I did but I knew every single person's pain that I'd be able to lean in with you listen to you and then encourage you to look but I don't but my prayer is that I hope that between us we can cover each other out we can encourage one another I want to spend the final few moments whether it's you by yourself and if that's what makes you comfortable that's fine or whether it's you have someone next to you who knows what the grief is to encourage them to look and Gracie's going to sing this song for us and it's called Soon I love this song because it gives us some very simple very powerful words to deal with grief and so when you find yourself hurting in deep pain in

deep anger you can remember these words and so maybe

I encourage you whatever place you're in right now that you would just maybe right now let us close our eyes Lord we ask you to search our hearts test our thoughts if there is any offensive way in us any anxiety in us when it comes to death any grief and we come to you not a concept of you not a memory of you not an image of you Lord you the living God you right here right now knowing that you have something to say about death you have the final word on death would you fill us with hope fill us with hope as we say and sing and pray the words soon very soon death will be no more our king is coming and he will make all things new he will wipe away every tear every sickness every pain and so while things are not how they should be they will they will in the end and we will dwell with you and it will be just as you wished it to be because of what you did thank you thank you Lord that the drilling has come right on time that we would be people who are okay sitting in this moment with the construction happening and my goodness it is annoying it is painful but we know that you are here making all things new and you are building a new city soon and very soon so for now we tolerate it we lean in we listen to one another but we look to you thank you for being here this morning be with us as we go for lunch be with us as we step into Monday be with us every day it is in your name we pray amen it is the end of our time here thank you for being here and I pray that this will bless you into this new week as well see you next Sunday Thank you.