

The Day of the Lord

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[0:00] Thank you. Thank you, Ellen. Good morning, everyone. The mood lighting is nice, but I know it! is conducive to nap time as well. But I just want to tell you as a preacher, when I see someone fighting! the nap, all I want to do is come and just kind of like just tilt your head and just let you sleep.

So if you're fighting and you're like, you know, when you're doing this, we do this, please just don't fight it. Just close your eyes. I know you're praying. I know you're interceding. And that's okay. But actually, speaking of what Ellen just said, I really do just felt as though like, James, you've got stuff to say, but it's really God who is the one who wants to speak. And so if I may, just lead us in just a final few moments of just quietness, that we would still our hearts, that we would hear whatever the Spirit wants to speak to us about. Can I lead us in that?

If there's a physical body posture that you use to remind yourself and that you're open to what the Lord is saying, I encourage you to do that now, whether it's opening up your hands, whether it's closing your eyes, whatever it may be.

Amen.

God, we know that you are here.

[2:24] And that changes everything. We know that you are working, that you are drilling, that you are making all things new. And as we sit here, we ask that you would usher in your kingdom, the one that is here but not yet.

Jesus, would you take your place on the throne? Would you speak to us because we yearn to hear from you? So now we open up your word, the one that gives life, the one that is something to say about every circumstance we face in this life.

So Holy Spirit, would you soften our hearts? Your word is a lamp to our feet, a light unto our path. And we lean on it, we rely on it. We look to it. And it is with gratitude, with reverence and awe that we now stand for the word of the Lord.

Can I invite you to stand? 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 1 to verse 11.

The day of the Lord. Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

[4:16] While people are saying there is peace and security, then suddenly destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of the light, children of the day.

We are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and to be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober. Having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet of hope of salvation.

For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we might live with Him.

[5:19] Therefore, encourage one another, and build one another up, just as you are doing. This is the word of the Lord. Please take a seat. Thank you, Nathan.

Birthday boy, Nathan. Thirty years young. Actually, this weekend, there's a lot of celebration going on, actually. So I think yesterday was Nathan...

Actually, I was kind of trolling him a little bit because I know that he had a party last night and that he was singing a lot of karaoke and drinking a lot of orange juice. So I wanted to test to see how his voice was this morning.

Just being pastoral there. Anyway, more on that later. We've been going through One Thessalonians, and anyway, I won't bore you with the whole recap.

I've done that for quite a few weeks now. We're coming towards the end. But I will say this. This book has taken us on a journey that actually I wasn't fully expecting, and maybe I should have done more due diligence on this. I was attracted by chapter one, which was that God was just so attracted to...

[6:17] Sorry, not God. Paul was so attracted to this church, this young church, and I was like, it would be really cool to hear what he wrote to a church that was around the same age as ours. And it would be interesting to see what they were so good at that he was praising them about.

What I didn't know was that it culminates in these last few weeks. Two weeks ago, I had to talk about sex because that's what Paul talked about. Last week, I talked about death. And this week, and I was like, okay, please be something nice just to finish the letter off.

And today, I'm actually talking about the end times. So this is what... So we're not going to be going through One Thessalonians anytime soon after this. So please do pay attention and listen to what we're going to be going through.

If you remember last week, I asked you what your relationship with death was like. And actually, your perspective on death affects how you live. Or rather, your perspective on the resurrection impacts the way you use your time right now.

He then goes into the next part. And the last week, I had this quote from C.S. Lewis, which I'll read to you again. If you are really a product of a materialistic universe, how is it that you don't feel at home there?

[7:16] Do fish complain of the sea for being wet? 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. He's saying, hey, there's something inside you that can't be satisfied by anything in this world. And actually, every time you see death, hear death, feel death, you're like, something's wrong.

Everything isn't quite as it should be. And there's anger. There's grief. And that's okay. Because we weren't made for this place. That this is simply just temporary.

Which then really begs the next question. And my brother last week, he quoted an author, Mark Twain. And he said, the two most important days in your life are the one, the day that you were born, and two, the day that you find out why.

And that reminded me of another quote of actually a college football coach from Wheaton College who actually said there were two other important days in this world, in your life. And it is today and that day.

[8:17] Today, which is where we are right now, and that day being that day that we meet our creator when our life comes to an end. And those two days are important because that day, how you perceive that day, will impact how you live today.

Right? So then the next question comes, and actually, Paul, as he's writing this and he's talking about death, he almost knows what the people there are asking. Because he's talking about death. He's talking about Christ coming back again.

The next question, therefore, is, well, when's he coming back? Well, if he's going to come back and we have to be prepared, what does that look like? And so we move into this chapter five, and he's talking a lot about this, and he starts there.

Verse one. And we're just going to go through. There's 11 verses today, but don't worry, we're going to go through fast. But I truly believe the Lord has something here for us. And so chapter five, verse one, if you're following along in your Bibles, just to track where we are in the servant today.

Verse one. Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. What's happening here is people are going, hey, you're talking about Jesus coming back.

[9:19] When is that then? And actually, that's been the question of mankind. We have been asking that question. In Ecclesiastes three, he planted eternity into the heart of man. We've all been asking, what's out there?

What's next? If you watch the Chinese TVB series, everyone's chasing after that. Because everyone is wanting immortality because they don't want to die. Or you watch the other films from

Hollywood about the apocalypse, and you see, oh, we are going to all die at some point. And everyone's asking, well, when? When is it happening? But the truth is, we can't predict when things are happening. This week, we couldn't really even predict the typhoon. Apparently, we've had four typhoons kind of circling around Hong Kong, and we don't really know when they're going to come or when they're going to go.

And it ended up with Thursday being the day where kids didn't need to go to school, which all the parents then celebrated. We can't even predict when a typhoon is coming. How can we predict when the end of the world is coming?

But the truth is, there have been many people who have tried. In 1992, October 1992, there were a group of Christians in Korea, I don't know if you've heard about this, who they had decided, and they had thought, this month, October 1992, Jesus is coming back again.

[10:30] And they believed it so much that they quit their jobs, they sold everything that they had, sold their houses, sold their sneakers. Johnny's like, never.

I'm taking those to heaven with me. Never. And they waited. And guess what? November 1992 arrived. And Jesus did not.

And they were devastated. To the point where actually, some actually committed suicide. This is a thing that has been around for a long time. When is Jesus coming back? And now, there's tons of theories, and there's tons of theologians who will talk to you about this, and there's the pre-trip and the post-trip, and when Jesus comes back, is he going to reign for a thousand years?

Or what's that going to look like? We're not going to delve into that today. But there's one thing I want to tell you that I know about when Jesus is coming back, is that I don't know when he's coming back. Because Jesus says time and time again, you won't know.

The day and the hour, you won't know. But rather, he wants to really tell us actually how we're supposed to live. Second verse. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

[11:35] It's impossible to preempt. You're not supposed to know. So I've had friends, actually, in England, this seems to be a growing thing, friends getting their homes burgled and experiencing the horror of not feeling safe in your own home.

Because you don't know when it's going to come. I've had friends who have been burgled multiple times, and the fear and the terror that comes with that. But the truth is, you can't just sit there in your house staying awake forever.

You've still got to live. You've still got to protect the house, but also make precautions, but then still get on with your life. So this is the interesting thing for us as Christians. We know Jesus is coming back.

We don't know when he's coming back. Then how are we supposed to live right now? Are we supposed to be constantly on edge? Every time we hear a loud noise, we wonder when it's time to come, that Jesus is coming. Every time we see thunder and lightning, oh, Jesus, is that you?

Well, we can't quite live like that either. We've got to try and find that balance between, hey, there is urgency in our lives, but we almost also still have to go as normal.

[12:38] And so this is what they're really worrying about. And verse three says this, while people are saying there is peace and security, then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

The sudden destruction really is just separation from God. Of course, those of you who have had children, you'll know labor pains do just come whenever they decide to come.

There is nothing you can do about them. We had a baby shower in our midst yesterday, and that's kind of the fate that awaits every mother, is kind of like, hey, baby's coming.

I don't know when, but they will come and we cannot escape. Of course, it's interesting. What he's talking about here is, hey, surrender control. You won't know.

You don't know. It's funny because in England for pregnancies and for childbirth, you kind of just wait for the child to kind of come themselves at the time that they want to come.

[13:40] In Hong Kong, it's a little bit different than we've seen is Hong Kong culture likes to seek control. You're nodding, right? Because Hong Kong people, we like to know when things are happening. And we like it to happen in our own circumstances.

So we schedule for the baby to arrive, and then we will operate to bring the baby out. And there's all these different kinds of things. That just speaks of the kind of that, maybe even that idol that we

have as believers here in Hong Kong, that we seek control.

We want to know exactly what time and what is happening. I feel great comfort when I walk into the MTR and I see exactly how many minutes it's going to be until the next train arrives. In the summer, when I went back to England and I looked at the departures board in King's Cross Station, that board means nothing.

You just wait. You just wait, and suddenly it will turn. It will go from not here to going. And then you've just got to run. Maybe our efficiency has led us to actually really feed into this idol that we want to control.

We want to know exactly what is happening, when it's happening, so we can know what to do. But just like labor, it does not happen that way. Verse 4. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.

[14:54] What he's saying here is, even though you don't know, there is still a way to live. Even though you don't know when he's coming, you do know he's coming.

So actually what he's saying is, the day of the Lord, which is how people have always described this day when Jesus returns, the day of the Lord should surprise you intellectually, because, oh, it's happening, he's coming.

But it shouldn't surprise you ethically. Does that make sense? The day of the Lord, when Jesus comes back, it should surprise you intellectually, because you're like, oh, I don't know when it's coming. Oh, he's coming now. But it shouldn't surprise you ethically, in the sense of, whoa, whoa, whoa, I need to get my act together, because by then it will be too late.

So we need to figure our way, a mindset to have, to be able to live in a way, where actually, we're ready for him whenever. The way we're living, shows that actually we're in line.

If Jesus, I mean, we can just do this mental exercise right now. If Jesus walked through the door right now, or maybe he wouldn't walk through that door. Maybe he would just come from the sky down there, and we see him descending onto earth.

[15:52] In that moment, how would you feel? Would you feel, oh, finally, you're here. I'm so glad that he's coming back for us. Or it will be like, oh my goodness, I have not got my life sorted yet.

I have still so much sin in my life, deliberate sin in my life. I've been so selfish. Actually, Jesus, don't come and have a look at my life. What Paul's saying here is, hey, the moment he comes, you're like, look, it's a shock.

It's a surprise. But my goodness, Jesus, I'm so glad that you're here. That's the mindset that we're supposed to have. We shouldn't be surprised. Why? Verse five, for you are all children of light, children of the day.

We are not of the night, or of the darkness. What does that even mean? I'm going to stop here for a second. Because we see this word a lot. You are children of light.

Cubon, you are a child of light. What does that mean to you? We see it, Ephesians, he talks about it. What does that actually mean?

[16:53] Turn to the person next to you, whether you know them or not. What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear that you are a child of light? What does it mean to you? There's no right or wrong answer right now. Just quickly, and I will pick on you afterwards.

30 seconds, go. Thank you.

All right, coming in in 15 seconds. All right, okay, we're gonna go.

Usually I pick on Juju, but I'm gonna pick on Jackie today. Just because you're sat next to him, that'll teach you. So, Child of Light, what does it mean to you or you guys?

To me, it's like you're just a reflector. So our job is to like polish the reflector. You're a reflector and you're basically reflecting the qualities that he has.

[19:04] That's good. So it's not really your own light, but it's his light that you're reflecting, and that's what makes you a child. I think this term here, child of light, children of light, is really a Hebrew idiom, which means that you exhibit the quality of something.

You are a child of something, you exhibit that quality, you reflect it. Good answer, Jackie. I'm gonna fly over here and I'm gonna go over. Whoa, everyone's avoiding eye contact. That's important to do. But Kelly's smiling, so I'm not gonna go for Kelly.

I'm gonna go for Teresa. What have you got, Teresa? What comes to mind for you guys? To live like Jesus.

It's interesting, when you're talking about being a child of light, which is really just a thing that you wouldn't first think that it's about behavior and about action, yet actually in 1 John, all of it, when he's talking about light, it's talking about the way that you live.

And when you live in light, it does affect the way you, how it impacts your life. Those of you who travel a lot, I know those who are flying to New York, for example, jet lag.

[20:09] Jet lag is such a killer. I hate jet lag and it feels as though as I get older it gets worse. But it's funny, how do you cope with jet lag? Paul, how do you cope with jet lag when you fly? Paulie?

Huh? Paulie? Paulie. Ha ha. Clever, clever. Paulie Paul. Oh, good. Johnny, you fly around everywhere.

Actually, what's the usual thing that you have to do when you come back from a place and you're jet lagged? Sleep on the plane. Sleep on the plane? According to the schedule that you're going through. According to...

Yeah, you're going through. According... Well, not all of us get to fly first class like you. Johnny. We're sponsoring. We're sponsoring. We're sponsoring. We're sponsoring. We're sponsoring. We're sponsoring.

Okay, we need some medical practitioners here. Who can tell us how you respond to jet lag? What is the thing that you're supposed to do? Sunlight. Sunlight. Sunlight.

[21:04] Isn't it interesting that your body is built to respond to light? And so there's... If you Google, and I've spent many a night Googling how to deal with jet lag, and there's a whole calculator.

There's a whole calendar that I only find out about afterwards. How... When you have to sit in daylight, and when you have to be in the dark. And it just baffles me. Wow. Without even thinking, we have to let our body be exposed to light, and our bodies will naturally...

It will change the way we behave. Isn't that interesting? That when you spend time in the light, it will change the way you live. That's what he's saying here.

Be children of light. Change the way you live. Because we all live in a city and in a society. And I was talking to Birthday Boy here a couple of days ago about actually just the marketplace that we have to work in.

The society that we have to live in. There's so much pressure. The cultural norms are so different to what the Bible is teaching us. And so we have to be able to seek to live in a way that is different. Because why?

[22:08] We are children of light. It changes the way you live. It also changes the way you see. Right? Those of you who have tried to wander through a dark room and then you end up standing on this and tripping on this and stubbing your toe on the table corner because you don't see.

When you see, when there is light, then you will know what to avoid. Then you will know how to live. So, it goes on to the next verse, verse 6 here. So, then let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

I've had that word in my mind this last two weeks. And I've been trying to figure out what it actually means. What does the word sober mean to you? Or really, rather, what's the first thing that comes to mind when you think of the word sober?

JP, what do you think of? Clear. Clear. Clear. That is so good. I like the word sober because it feels like it has a hint of negativity to it, but really it isn't.

It's just actually, can I be clear-minded about something? When I look at something, can I go, well, actually, oh, there's pros, it's cons, this is what it means, this is what it doesn't mean.

[23:18] And just to be clear-minded about it. And when you're clear-minded about it, the other meaning for the word sober means that you are self-controlled. Because you will look, and if you are sober and you're at home and you're alone, but you have a clear mind, you will know that there are some things that if you do, you know it might be satisfying you for a temporary moment, but you know this will make you feel worse later.

That when you're reacting to someone who you don't like, but if you remain sober, then you are clear about maybe why they're saying what they're saying and that you respond appropriately. To be clear-minded.

To be sober. Are we sober? As we see our children who are growing up, sometimes they're not, especially when they're two years old. They don't see things very clearly, do they, Alex?

They respond very strongly to certain things. You don't need to respond like that. Zoom out, EJ. Look at the big picture. Everything's okay. But as we grow up, as we become children of light, we also should be sober.

So we have a clear grasp of what's actually happening in this world. To be sober. And then it carries on on that. Verse seven. For those who sleep, sleep at night. And those who get drunk, drunk at night.

[24 : 29] Not clear-minded. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. Suddenly he goes, hey, be clear-minded.

Stay sober. See things for just as what they are. Not anymore or not any less. And then what? And then put on your armor. What he's saying here is, we're in a battle. We're in a war here.

1 Peter 5a talks about this. Be sober and self-controlled at all times. Why? Because the enemy is prowling. He is looking to attack. He is looking to discourage you, to distract you, to deceive you, and to divide us.

So we have to remember that. And it's interesting. If you go back to verse three, while people are saying there is peace and security, then sudden destruction will come. I've been in Hong Kong for five and a half years now.

And we've had some things happen in Hong Kong in these last few years, right? We first had the protest that just started right here on that Wednesday in 2019. And then, of course, we had COVID.

[25 : 35] You know, I remember throughout all of those things, there was one thing that I actually really appreciated. It let me be sober. It gave me a clear mind of things. Or rather, when things aren't going your way, you finally get to see the bigger picture.

It's when we have peace and security, when everything is going well and fine, that's when actually, strangely, ironically, we don't really think or see clearly. But I remember so clearly when things were happening, when the city was in array.

When we were just, we were outraged every other day as we were following the COVID count and all the different restrictions that were coming. I'll tell you, and those of us who were in ministry were like, actually, we cherish this time.

Because suddenly it felt like the veil was removed, right? Do you remember that? And it's like, whoa, what are we doing here? What is this life about? But it's funny, as soon as peace and security comes back, as soon as travel restrictions are lifted, suddenly we enter into this kind of numbness of life where we're not actually thinking clearly anymore.

At least not as when we were seeing all this horrifying news that was happening around. Isn't that interesting? For us, it's how can we stay alert and recognize that this is a battle?

[26 : 57] And Nicky Gumbel, the one who started Alpha, he shared this story, and some of you will have heard me share this. He shares this fictional story between Satan and some of his minions. And the minions go to Satan and go, hey, this is a little bit like C.S. Lewis's screw tape letters kind of thing.

And it was like, hey, boss, Satan, how can we pull mankind away from you, away from God? I don't know, what about if we make them obsessed with pleasure?

And then Satan goes, well, no, they'll be obsessed for a little while and they'll chase all the desires of the flesh. But at some point they'll get bored and they'll realize that actually it doesn't bring the contentment that they're craving for and that they will turn back to God.

Oh, well, what about money? Why don't we do that? Why don't we get them so obsessed with money? And then they'll turn away from God. Well, money again works for a little while, but eventually even those who have lots and those who have little, eventually they'll realize that actually it doesn't do anything for them.

Their happiness is not, cannot, their joy cannot be tied to how much money they have. And then they were like, well, boss, then what do we do? How do we distract and pull humans away from God forever?

[28 : 03] And then the devil replies, and this is just fictional by the way, Nicky Gumbel did not hear this conversation. He said, well, just tell them that there is no hurry.

Just tell them there is no rush. Let them believe that God does exist, but that there is no real significance or importance or urgency. Let them live as they are.

It's Matthew 24 in the days of Noah when they were just eating and drinking and being happy and marrying. Just let them be in that lull where they think there is peace and security. That, my dear minions, is more powerful than anything that we can do to actively try and pull them away. It reminds me of the analogy or the analog of the frog being bored alive in water. You don't realize, the frog doesn't realize that it's in this kind of lukewarm water that Chinese people like to drink. But then once you keep heating the water up, it doesn't realize what environment it's in.

[29:06] Christine and I, we had a similar story. We have MJ currently living inside our room. And of course, he cries at night and he feeds at night and he does something else at night, which is terrifying, which is he fills his nappy with this substance that is just the smell of it, the stench of it is incredible.

But of course, we're tired. And so, one night, the nappy was changed, but it was left in the room. You'd think we'd know.

But then, because we're so used to it, it kind of just fills the atmosphere. I think every parent has experienced this to a degree. And you just don't know anymore how smelly your room is.

Until Christina walked out in the morning. And then she walked back in. And it hit her. And it slapped her, it punched her in the face. And she was like, this room stinks.

And I was like, really? Really? Oh. Until I walked out and then I realized I wasn't sober about my surroundings in that moment because I've become so used to it.

[30:16] I'm so happy there. Do we have that sometimes? That actually, we don't actually realize how deprived we are as a mankind. Of course, when we look on the news, sometimes it shows us this, but we've become numb to that also.

And we don't realize the stench that we're actually living in. That we are no longer sober about this. We are no longer desperate for a savior because we're just kind of happy where we're at.

Scripture tells us here, this is a battle. And the enemy is going to try to distract you. To lull you into this place where you think there is peace and security.

When in reality, sudden destruction is coming. And that, of course, should keep us on our toes. But there is hope. And we're going to finish with hope. Verse 9.

I'll read that to you again. Verse 9. Listen to it and I'll read it slowly. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[31:18] One more time. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. How often do we think when God comes, he's going to judge? And we're going to be in trouble because we've made so many mistakes.

This judgment that is coming is going to be bad. When time and time again, he says, he doesn't want, he's not destining us for wrath.

That judgment is simply making right what we wronged in the first place. But he's not here to rebuke you. And how many of us actually struggle to get that in our minds?

We say God loves me and God is good and he's kind and we sing these songs about the goodness of God. But in reality, deep inside, actually, we're still expecting him to rebuke us. We're still expecting judgment.

We're still fearing judgment. We're still fearing wrath. But scripture, God says, no. Don't you understand? I didn't come for those who are perfect and good. I came for those who need help. I didn't come so I can pour out my wrath on you.

[32:22] I came so that you would be saved. That understanding of who God is, I think needs constant reminding for us. Because I think even though we think we know intellectually that God is love, that God is kind, because we're so in tune with our own depravity and our own state, our own fallen state, we still think he's going to come and he's going to give us some real grief.

And yet he says time and time again, the wrath won't be on you. Because I poured out my wrath onto my son through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we might live with him.

That labor pain that suddenly strikes, that sudden destruction he talks about in verse 3, 4 and 5. Of course, you remember, I mean, now, yes, a woman going into labor, there is a lot of pain there.

But there's life that comes out. And by some medical miracle, apparently, women forget about the pain, apparently, once they see the baby. Is that true? Is it? Yeah, it's kind of true. I mean, however painful it was, and somehow it's just, there is life.

So a sudden destruction or that sudden labor pain that comes isn't the thing that's going to destroy us. It's actually going to give us life. But what kind of life is this? And this is where I want to touch on the final thing here.

[33:47] Because actually the life that he's talking about isn't just life here. It is life here too, but it isn't just life here. And I want to talk about, when I'm talking about the end times, I kind of have to touch on this topic of heaven.

What do you picture heaven to be? Growing up, I thought heaven, well, there are images of heaven, of clouds, of harps. But is that, I mean, what do you see in heaven?

What do you think of when you see heaven? Flo, when I say heaven, what do you think? What does it look like? Golden streets. Wow. Golden streets. We see this kind of perfect, glorious, shiny place. What else do you see? Uday, what do you think about when you see heaven? If I was to ask you to describe heaven, your version of heaven. Eternal joy. Eternal joy. This place where you have this joy that is completely unaffected by circumstances.

Then it will just keep on going forever. Queenie, what about you? What's yours? Emerald City. Emerald City, Wizard of Oz. That is so good. I want to be in your heaven. That's a good...

[34:55] It's interesting. Sometimes when we think about heaven, we think of this complete blank vastness. Have you watched Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows? That scene where a deceased Dumbledore stands with Harry in King's Cross Station.

It's all blank and white. I'm like, I have this image that heaven is just going to be this glorious, just white plainness nothingness. And everyone's just going to be singing, holy, holy, holy is the Lord forever and ever.

Which for some people, it's your kind of jam. But for others, people are like, really? This chorus again? And again? And again? Oh, we're not stopping. We're going to continue. Okay. But actually, that isn't the Jewish vision of heaven.

We have this idea that heaven is this place that we escape from earth to. That finally we'll be rid of all the problems of humanity, all the pain, all the selfishness, all the corruption.

And we're going to go back and wander into this garden. And I want to tell you that is completely unbiblical and untrue. We are not going back to the Garden of Eden. Where are we going back to?

[35:57] It looks a little bit more like the Emerald City. It has gold streets. It has eternal joy. When Jesus was praying just before he died in John 17, verse 3, he says, I pray that they would have eternal life, which is what?

To know you. This place is beyond anything that we can imagine. And it isn't just a garden. If you look at Revelation 21, it is a city.

God's plan always. And this is, I wonder, if you have this image of this beautiful garden where there is nothing there, no pain, just vast, spacious places where you're wandering through the meadows, it isn't.

It is a city, garden, cosmos. It is like Kowloon Park. Gaps and I, we have spent quite a lot of time just wandering through Kowloon Park.

And I love Kowloon Park. Actually, Hong Kong Park gives me the same vibes, by the way, for those people on the island who don't want to go to the Kowloon side. It is just this place where there is a garden, it is a park, and there is buildings.

[37:00] Honestly, every time I walk in, I am like, it is going to look a little bit like this. It is going to feel a little bit like this. In fact, every single good thing that we experience in our flesh here is a mirror, is a reflection of what is out there.

The exhilaration that Mihi and Paul have when they sing or play music, that points to the pleasure that they will have in heaven.

The joy that Gabriel has when he sings Taylor Swift at karaoke. And if you have seen Gabriel sing Taylor Swift at karaoke, it is quite a sight.

His fiancée is kind of just covering her face right now. But it is a mirror of that thing that we are going to experience. Every time Kenneth enjoys and sips some special wine that he has, the sensations that he has in his mind and in his body and on his tongue, it points to a pleasure in heaven.

And we will get all those same things. Every time Julian, the exhilaration he gets from reading a contract and reading books, he will get to experience that in heaven.

[38:29] Every time I walk and I see something in Hong Kong that I truly enjoy, whether it's the Chao Chan Tang, on Jiu Long Gai, Weng Lok Yun, the Bolo Bao and the Ma Chuan Gao, I'm like,

oh, I'm going to feel this in heaven but a million times more.

That should excite you. Because I think sometimes we've settled for less because we think heaven is this blank space. And we actually don't know what we're going to be enjoying there. And so because we don't really know what we're actually going to be enjoying, we just settle for the snacks and the things that we have on this earth.

But if you imagine everything that you love now, you're going to be able to experience in heaven to an infinite degree. That's worth waiting for. I've just finished the book *The Great Divorce*.

Who's read the book *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis? Just this fascinating book that C.S. Lewis dreamt up of, just this bus journey that some guy took from hell to heaven. And he's trying to describe, again, it's just describing.

But the way he describes it is everything, the noise is immense and overwhelming, but it's beautiful. And every sensation that we feel as humans, but amplified in the most beautiful way.

[39:47] That's what heaven is going to be. That's what the day of the Lord that is coming is coming for us. And so is it worth waiting for? Yes. Is it worth changing the way you live? Yes.

Because when that day comes, it will all be worth it. So let that day affect today, is really what he's saying here. Dallas Willard, who's maybe the previous generation's John Mark Homer, says this, The life we now have as the persons we now are in that day when Jesus returned will continue, and continue in the universe in which we now exist.

The life we now have will be the same, it will continue, but just in a better way. N.T. Wright says this, The Messiah will come and restore things to their original state, the universal renewal of the world.

Isn't that going to be good? So don't think of heaven as this completely new place that we don't understand. Actually, no, we get to see it now. The things that we enjoy now, the good things now, are pointing us to heaven.

And let those be signs to us. And finally, it finishes this, verse 11, Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up just as you are doing. What's it saying here is that journey of kind of keeping yourself alert is not done alone.

[41:03] It requires people around you to encourage you. Hey, eyes on the prize. That's what we need people around to say. Whenever we do lose sight of ourselves, whenever we become less sober, we need people around us to go, Hey, this is what it is.

But look at that. Behold. Look. Eyes on the prize. Eyes on the prize. And maybe just I'll finish with a couple of final tips about what that looks like when we encourage one another, because we need it. This week I spent some time with some pastors in town. And man, even pastors need it. Pastors need that space just to go, Oh, what are we doing here? Why am I dealing with all these people and all these complaints? Hey, eyes on the prize.

Do you have those people in your life who tell you that? We need to encourage one another. Maybe what does that look like? That looks like, Hey, send each other messages of compliment.

Right? Even if I, as I say that maybe, maybe we'll spend even 10 seconds. Now have a thing. God, is there anyone that I should just drop a message to? Do you know when you've received a message like, Hey, thinking about you, hope you're doing well.

[42:11] How's things going? Praying that you would have, let's be people that actually encourage one another who are willing to actually go out of our way. To send a positive message to encourage one another.

Because I know I need that. So you're all welcome to send me a message after this service, just to encourage me. Because we need reminding.

Because we always get lost. And this is really, there's this passage in one Chronicles, which again, I don't think anyone has a favorite passage in Chronicles. But recently I saw it and I was like, man, in one Corinthians 12, it's talking about the people of Israel.

And there's this one group. And there's this one line. Actually, I used a sticky tape just to kind of put it out there. It's about the men of Issachar. And it's actually King Solomon, when he took over rule, he split them all up into the 12 districts, just like the Hunger Games.

And then from there, the men of Issachar had a district that they were looking after. And that district just began to grow and began to grow stronger and stronger. And there's one line and it's just trapped in the middle of a whole list of things.

[43:14] But it's fascinating. And I want to read it to you. 1 Chronicles 12, verse 22 says this. Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do. That's it.

There were a group of men, the men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what to do. I pray that we would be a people who would look at the times and seasons, we would understand what is happening.

Whether we're watching Fox News or CNN or SCMP, we know what is happening and we know what to do. That we are sober, that we don't get caught up, but we are clear minded with what we're supposed to do.

That we are children of light. So we have to think about that. The small decisions that we're making, who are we becoming? Are we actually being children of light?

And if Jesus wants to come back right now, would that be good news to us? Or do we think it's good news and we say, Jesus, come, but actually only come after I've completed all my career levels that I want to achieve.

[44:15] Only come once I have the family that I want to have. Or have we truly surrendered and go, Jesus, come back whenever you want, because you are the only thing that I want. Are we people who have that clear mind?

And then we pray for one another. Jesus was frustrated always by the people that he was hanging around. In Matthew 24, just as he's going in 26, sorry.

And he's like, hey, you guys wait here. I'm going to go and pray. And what do they do? They fall asleep. He says, pray that you will remain alert. Pray for one another that you will remain alert. So I encourage you, and we're not going to do it here. But when you are with each other. And we were talking about this this week. When we are with each other, just hanging out, whether it's just we've just finished Muay Thai or we've just finished wine tasting or we've just had a nice dinner together.

Can we be people who actually go, hey, let's finish this evening by praying? How can I pray for you? I know we've just finished this board game and you're feeling a little bit salty because I just beat you. But can I pray for you and love on you as well, my brother, my sister?

[45:24] Can we be people who, whatever we're doing in this life and we can enjoy all the pleasures of this life, point each other back to him? That's the goal. That's the goal here.

There are only two important days. It is today and that day. And so how we approach death, how we approach the resurrection impacts how we live today.

Let us live with that kind of urgency. I'm going to invite Paul and the team back up now. And the team back up now, we're going to finish with one last song. And this song really is a powerful way that I have always experienced in pointing me back to that day, pointing me back to what is important.

Because we know, you know, I know, when we kind of just get on with our lives, we get sucked into our work. We get sucked into our relationships. We get sucked into our social lives. We get sucked into everything here.

But when we look and see the glory of Christ, when we imagine the golden streets that we're about to walk down, then everything pales in comparison.

[46:28] Let's spend that time now. Can I invite you to stand? And we're going to respond through song and through prayer. So, Jesus, we respond to you now through song.

And we ask that you would give us the strength to turn our eyes to you. That we won't be consumed by our own stories, but that we would look at your story, your life, your death and your resurrection. And be encouraged to live today for that day. Thank you.