

Is "Nothing" the Final Word About You?

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that you would gently and deeply pour out your Holy Spirit upon us as we think upon your word. Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would help us, would bring your word and have your word touch our heart, the center of who we are, so that in our day-to-day life, we might live in such a way that we bear much fruit for your glory. And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

So I was off last Sunday. I was at another church. I had a week off. And so two Sundays ago was the last time that I was here preaching and leading the service. And I didn't know two weeks ago that as I was doing the service that there were three people here waiting to talk to me after the service. And they wanted to talk to me after the service because their dad had died and they wanted me to do a funeral. In fact, they wanted me to do the funeral during my holiday because I had a week of holiday. So it was Craig, the husband of Dodie. And I knew Greg a little bit and I knew Dodie very well. So I said I would do the funeral. And so, you know, you're preaching, you're doing this. Many of us have all maybe had, I mean, you know, notices of death and stuff like that. And it always comes, almost always comes unexpected and unbidden. This morning, just before the eight o'clock service, about five minutes before, I get a text on my phone. And Dodie, whose husband had died just a week and a half, two weeks ago, she died at 3.30 this morning. So I'll be doing a funeral probably on Wednesday, actually, for Dodie, who was a long, fairly long time member of this church. We don't like to think about death. In fact, one of the reasons that we have the curtain up today is because this is like a normal, I mean, not really a normal household scene. For those of you who are young, most houses used to have ashtrays back in the old days. Because so many people smoked. And it was considered polite, even if you were non-smoking, that when smokers came that they could smoke in your house. And so I grew up in a house of non-smokers, but we had an ashtray. And when smokers would come, we'd pull out the ashtray. And so they would have an ashtray. So this is a bit of a dated type of a house. But, you know, it's in a sense, it's life, right? It's where it sort of is very, makes it very conscious of where we live. And sometimes, you know, the curtain here, being in front of the cross and everything, it can make us feel as if, you know, on one hand, it's a good thing that we can sort of feel like we're in a bit of a holy place. But it can also be something that it makes us not think of life as much. And having the curtain up been looking at this living room thing, even if it's a bit dated, somebody told me that it's an Anglican room because there's decanters of alcohol over there. But then another person told me it can't be an Anglican room because there's no picture of the queen. So I don't know, maybe it's a lapsed Anglican house or something like that. I don't know. Anyway, the fact of the matter is that every single one of us in this room will die. Unless Jesus comes back, every one of us will die. And in Canada, we don't like thinking about it. And in fact, there's lots of pressure to not even use the word die when we're talking about different people who are dying. But we will all die. And how we understand death and how we think about death makes a really big difference to how we live, at least potentially. And the Bible text today that we're going to look at, because we're preaching through the book of 2 Corinthians, is a very important and powerful text about death, death for a Christian. So it would be a great help for me if you'd get your Bibles out and turn to 2 Corinthians 5. If you don't have a Bible, there's some Bibles over here and you can just get up and wander over there and get your Bible. But if you could, actually, before we look at 2 Corinthians 5, let's look at 2 Corinthians 4, verses 17 and 18. They're the two verses before chapter 5. And here's what the text says in 2 Corinthians 4, verses 17 and 18. Verse 17, you might remember two weeks ago that it was a verse that we had up on the screen and we said it quite a few times because it's one of the most beautiful verses in the Bible, I think. And it says this, for this light momentary affliction, 2 Corinthians 4, verse 17, for this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of

glory beyond all comparison. Isn't that just so beautiful? I'll just, I'll read it again. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. Now, just before we need to read the next verse, verses like this have been very, very influential to many, many Christians throughout the years. And it tends to create within Christians, whether we're aware of it or not, almost this sense that when we die, we become more spiritual. In fact, we might become spiritual. We have echoes of it in our culture, even if our culture isn't aware of the fact that when, like, if you probably went down Rideau Street after this and asked people time after time what happens to you when you die, many, many people will probably say, well, we either, that we go to a better place, that our spirits pass to a better place. And many people don't realize that they're sort of having an echo and a shadow and a memory of a Christian idea which has been, has been twisted and turned a bit, but it's in fact where people get it from. And they also get it from some fundamental intuitions, which I'm going to talk about in a moment. But many Christians, we tend to think of the fact that when we die, we just, we go to a better place. We go to heaven. And it's a spiritual reality. And reading a text like this, it's very easy to see.

[6 : 46] It says this, that we're being prepared for this eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, and that we look to the things that are unseen, not the things that are seen. It's very easy to understand this in a very, very spiritual sense. But Paul, the writer of this, immediately goes from giving this view that makes it look like it's just going to be a type of spiritual reality that we head to.

He grounds it and helps us to understand that in fact, it's not going to be spiritual in the way that we think of spiritual as being something non-physical, that it's going to be a physical reality that we go to when we die in Christ. It goes like this.

Actually, I'll just start the last sentence of chapter four. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling. If indeed by putting it on, we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Andrew, could you put up verse one for me on the screen, please? Could you all say this verse with me together?

For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. This passage is to teach you, if you could put up the first point, Andrew, all of these verses which I just read are teaching us a very, very important idea. God will resurrect me with a resurrected body to dwell in the new heaven and earth with him and his people. I'm not saying he's going to do that to me because there's something special about me. There's nothing special about me that's relevant to being resurrected. I, like all human beings, are fallen and a rebel against God and have my only trust and confidence is that I have put my faith and trust in Jesus and trusted in what he has accomplished for me in his, in the cross and in his resurrection. I'm speaking here as a Christian that God will resurrect me with a resurrected body to dwell in the new heaven and earth with him and his people. That's what the Bible's teaching.

[9 : 36] You know, because if you go back, in fact, the Bible, Paul gives in these four verses three different images that all communicate to us that there's going to be, in a sense, an embodied existence that we're going to continue to have in the new heaven and the new earth. After Jesus comes and there's a judging of the living and the dead and God in his sovereign power recreates the entire order and we now live in a new heaven and a new earth. And there's three different images. The first image is in verse one, for we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And some of your Bible translations might not have the word destroyed, it might have the word dismantled. And the original word in the original language has, it has to actually be destroyed, dismantled slash destroyed. They're both completely good ways to understand what the original word says. And so we have this image that there's this sense that the tents are transitory things, that they don't last very long, that they're far more flimsy and weak and houses are something far more substantial. And on one hand, we know that, that there is something weak about our bodies and our bodies, they do get dismantled, they do get destroyed, they do come to an end. But this

text is telling us that what God has done, and it's very interesting, did you notice it says a house not made with hands? Not made by human effort.

Or human ingenuity, or just anything human. Me, and for good or for ill, part of how I am and how I look, well, part of it is, I guess, the amount I exercise or don't exercise, how I eat, how I don't eat, how I sleep, or how I don't sleep. In other words, the work of my hands. And more fundamentally, a lot of how I am is completely and utterly the type of ancestors that I have, and how the DNA has gotten mixed throughout the generations, giving me a different type of basic abilities and propensities and weaknesses and strengths. Got my mom's, my dad's eyesight, my mom's asthma. You know, my hairline is more and more and more looking like my mom's dad's as I get older. It has nothing to do with anything I've done, but it's still all the work of our hands, right?

And so there's this image that Christians are like everybody else. We're jars of clay. We're earthen vessels, and this me will be dismantled. It will be destroyed. There's no particular option about that. But when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, what we have, and we know that we will have once this is dismantled, is that God gives us something not made with hands.

[12 : 38] And it's something that will last for all eternity. And then if you just go down to the next verse, he gives you a different image, because he says the same thing three times with three slightly different images, because it's a really important thing for us to get our minds around and to grasp.

I'll explain why it's important later on. But it's an important thing for us to grasp that the physical and the body matters. And that, I mean, you know, if you think about it for a second, you know, one of the reasons we know that God loves matter? He made a lot of it.

I mean, that's just so shocking how much matter he made. How big the universe and the galaxy is. He loves matter. And he made lots of it.

Look at verse 2. For in this tent we groan, and longing to put on our heavenly dwelling. If indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked.

And so, you know, it's once again the image, like the image that we die and then we just become pure spirit. It's like we become more naked. We become less us, because we really need clothes, especially in Ottawa in the winter.

[13 : 49] But all the time we need clothes, and it's part of who we are to have some clothes. And so rather than this image that what happens with death is that there becomes, there's this type of diminishment, a nakedness that grows, until we're just bare spirit.

The image here is that as if in death, and you're walking along, and death comes, and we're going to see in a moment it swallows us up. And as there's this image of something that comes and swallows us up, it's not just an image of being swallowed.

It's what's actually happening is that God is putting something on us. And rather than becoming diminished, we become more clothed, clothed by God.

Clothed not by human hands, but by God. And the groaning here, which is being talked about, isn't the groaning you hear maybe when I have to get up after not having slept very long, and then I have to go down the steps, and you're sort of groaning because you're tired, and I'm groaning because maybe my joints are a little bit sore in the morning when I've just woken up.

The closest analogy is if you're out later on after the service, and you go somewhere with your friend or your kids or your husband or your wife, and you decide to have some dessert, and it's a really fancy dessert place, and the person that you're with, they take a fork of dessert or spoon, and they eat it.

[15 : 24] They go, oh, oh, is that ever good? And then they want to share it with you. And then you take a bite of the dessert, and you go, oh, oh, is that ever good?

That's the type of groaning that the Bible's talking about. It's a groaning of longing that what's going to happen after death for those of us who are in Christ.

That we'll see in a moment that God himself puts in his children beginning to long and yearn to be with him where he dwells, face to face, with resurrected bodies that are healed and whole as resurrected people, so that our spirits are at one with our bodies, and our bodies are at one with our mind and our heart and our spirit, and our mind and our heart and our spirit and our bodies are at one with the created order, and they are at one with our creator, and they are at one with each other.

Not that we all become the same, but at one in terms of that there's this basic harmony, because as we all know right now, there's a fundamental disharmony in our world that, you know, I want to be able to run and do certain things like I could when I was younger, but I can't do that.

My spirit and my mind desire, but my body can't. Where you want to be across somewhere and be able to be with your friend in the far side of the country when they're going through something, but your spirit or your mind wants to, but your body can't do it, and we're at disharmony with each other, and we're at disharmony with God, and there's this picture that there will come a day when this earthly tent is destroyed or dismantled, and we are in a building that is prepared.

[17 : 13] Our body is something not made with human hands, not a result of our genetics and our DNA, not a result of whether we have cared for our body very well or not cared for it very well, not whether or not we have been granted spectacular genetics or just the lottery of genetics has just really worked against us.

We will have this body not made with hands as resurrected. And the third image here is, for while we are, it's in verse 4. Actually, could you put this up here, Andrew?

I'd like us to say it together. Could you put it up? Can we all say this together? For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Isn't that beautiful? That's the third image. The first image is a house. The second image is of being clothed. The third image is that we'll be swallowed. And the language is of completely swallowed. But what swallows us is life, more life. It's as if when we die, it looks as if death is swallowing us.

[18 : 33] And death is swallowing us. But something bigger, life, is swallowing us. And that which is mortal is swallowed up by life. Can we say it again?

For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

It's a very, very, very, very, very beautiful, beautiful passage. I can hear in my head, as I say these things to you, the voice of some of the people that I talk to in the coffee shops.

One fellow, well, actually several people that I talk to, once they get comfortable, you know, with me, and they say, you know, I'm a scientist, or I'm just a simple guy, simple gal, I just observe what I see.

And you know, there's no evidence for any of this. I mean, it's a very nice story, George, and you told it very, very movingly. But you know, the evidence is, is that when you die, that's it. There's nothing.

[19 : 46] You just die, and then you're over. It's over. There's no evidence for anything like this. It sounds very poetic, and very beautiful, and if it gives you some comfort, and helps you live your life, then I'm not, I don't want to rain on your parade.

I don't want to depress you, or anything like that. I don't want to make you feel as if, oh, dang, all this stuff that I talk about on a Sunday morning is just rubbish, and maybe I should quit if I have any type of integrity, and I don't have a job, and I'm, you know, I don't, I can't afford to retire, and all of that.

But you know, they just say, well, you know, there's no evidence for this. When I did the funeral for Dodie's husband, just, I don't know what it is, ten days ago, nine days ago, actually, the funeral for, if I do Dodie's funeral on Wednesday, then it would have been, on Wednesday, it would have been two weeks earlier that I did her husband's funeral, and, um, I don't entirely know where Craig was with things.

I know he had a, a fair dose of skepticism. I also know he was a really, really fine man, and he came to many church services, and I don't know everything there is to know about him. I'm not making any comments. But when I, I went to his funeral, I felt led to do a particular thing when it came time for me to share my word.

And, uh, I, I did what I often do in funerals. Um, I said, um, I'm going to take a few minutes in the service, and I know that there are people here who would describe themselves as agnostics, maybe some who describe themselves as atheists, and I know that there are people here, probably, who follow some of the great religions that have been on the planet, and probably some who are, would describe themselves as being more spiritual rather than religious, and are putting together, you know, a different way of being spiritual and coming with meaning to life.

[21 : 43] But I would just like to take a few moments to share with you what my hope is as a Christian, what the Christian hope is. And then I looked at Dodie, and I said, what Dodie and my

hope as Christians are, as, what Dodie's hope and mine as Christians is in the face of death.

And, the Christian hope in the face of death isn't based on just intuitions. It isn't based on just longings or yearnings for something better.

It isn't based on an analysis of the cycles of the season. It's not based on things like butterflies and, you know, how they're chrysalis and all that type of stuff and they become butterflies.

Nothing based, not based on anything like that. It's based on the real defeat of death in history by Jesus. Jonathan spoke last Sunday on 1 Corinthians 15 and that actually was my text at Craig's funeral.

And, you know, it's very, very interesting. If you go to the religion faculty at Carleton or University of Ottawa or if you go to the theology faculty of St. Paul University, which is very, very, very, very, very liberal, they would probably say in the theology faculty there that most of the things in the New Testament never happened so they're quite liberal.

[23 : 10] But if you were to do a survey of scholars over the last 100, 150 years, you would find several things that they all agree on. They would all agree that Jesus lived.

You know, up until very recently, part of Marx's dogma was that they, Jesus never lived, but that was just Marxist dogma. It wasn't based on any type of historical stuff.

But most people would agree, most scholars who studied these things would agree that Jesus lived.

There's also actually almost complete unanimity on the fact that Jesus died on the cross.

The only people today fundamentally who don't believe that Jesus died on the cross are Muslims and they don't believe it because of historical research. They believe it because the Quran, written over 600 years later, actually spoken by Muhammad over 600 years later, but not actually written until about 150 years after Muhammad.

So 750 years after the historical events, it says that Jesus didn't die on the cross. But so apart from Muslims, people who study the issue historically would agree that Jesus lived.

[24 : 21] They would agree that Jesus died. They'd also agree, go to Bart Ehrman, go to the most skeptical scholars that the early Christians almost immediately proclaimed that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Virtually all scholars would accept that that goes back almost immediately to 33 or 30 AD, which is when Jesus died upon the cross, depending on how you date it with new moons and stuff like that. It's probably one of those two years. But there's very little doubt, even amongst the most liberal or skeptical scholars, that the proclamation of Jesus having risen from the dead emerged almost immediately.

And the fourth thing, which isn't quite unanimous, but it's over probably 75% of scholars, even skeptical scholars, is that the tomb was empty and that everybody would say they've never found the body.

And so that actually is historical, that he lived, that he died, that there's bodies never been found.

And that almost immediately, the Christians proclaimed that he had risen from the dead.

[25 : 33] A fifth thing, which could be added historically, is that the primary witnesses of this, all but one of them died in some type of exile or official death by the state.

died in some type of official execution by the state, and they died proclaiming that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Now, of course, atheists and skeptical scholars, they just leave it at that. They would just say, these are the things that happened, but they can't explain it. I would say that, in fact, the original Christian account perfectly explains the data.

That the reason early Christians proclaimed that Jesus had risen from the dead, and the reason the Christian faith grew in Jerusalem so quickly, and then spread, was because, in fact, Jesus really did rise from the dead.

that he really did rise from the dead. That it's actually true. And if it's true that he really, really did die upon the cross, and he really, really did rise from the dead, and that this, contrary to my skeptical friends, isn't just me having some type of pious belief or intuition, but me actually being able to look at the historical record and the data, and you.

[27 : 13] And in a sense, my skeptical friends, they come to the data and history, and at that point in time, their minds balk, and they take a step back. They won't take that further step, because they would say that any explanation, even if I don't have one, has to be more probable than the fact that Jesus died.

And part of the reason is that if Jesus did die and rise from the dead after he had predicted that he would, that it means the universe is not at all like we think. because this, this death and resurrection starts to have a particular type of authority because of the context of Jesus' teaching.

Now, I say all of this because, go back, can we say verse four again? Say verse four again with me. for while we were still in this tent, we groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Andrew, could you put up the next point, please? Death thought it had swallowed Jesus, but Jesus swallowed death. death. Death thought it had swallowed Jesus, but Jesus swallowed death.

It's very interesting, if you go back and you look at the seven last words of Jesus on the cross from the historical records, which we now call the Gospels, and you'll see that the second to last word that Jesus says on the cross is it is finished.

[28 : 51] And then shortly after that, the language that he uses and the verb tenses are very interesting. The very final word that he says from the cross is, into your hands, Father, into your hands I give my spirit.

And the thing which is interesting about that in the text, and it shocks the Romans who were guarding the cross and everything, is the type of imagery and the language of Jesus is using is very different than how we would normally use, talk about our own death.

You see, in a sense, you could picture that I'm living my life every day, I walk, and day by day I go, and death, that grim reaper, is slowly getting close to me.

And at some point in time, I do it all I can. Maybe even in those latter days, I become a vegetarian. I don't know, Lord have mercy, because that will maybe give me an extra few months.

And then maybe I'll even, I had an uncle who died, and he was Irish. He loved a good Irish fry-up breakfast. Potato scones, all dipped in bacon fat and fried, with fried tomatoes, and fried mushrooms, and fried eggs.

[30 : 15] And you take some of that bacon fat, and you pour it on top of the eggs. And he became a vegan at the end when he was suffering with cancer, in the hope that it would let him live a little bit longer.

So maybe I even become a vegan. But eventually, no matter what I've tried, death comes and swallows me up. It's inevitable. But the language and the imagery of Jesus' final word about the cross implies that death can't just swallow Jesus.

Jesus enters death. And so from the outside, you see death swallowing Jesus.

But Jesus has predicted that he's going to die on the cross. In fact, he says that he comes specifically to die upon the cross. And after he's done his work upon the cross, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

The eye thirst, it is finished. And he enters death. And Christians understand that as he enters death, and death appears to swallow him, but Jesus then experiences every single thing there is to experience of death with nothing left over.

[31 : 27] And he emerges on the far side of death, and he has triumphed over death, and death no longer applies to him or has any hold on him because he has completely triumphed over death.

And so we see that it looks as if death has swallowed Jesus. But on Easter Sunday and with the resurrection appearances, we begin to understand that Jesus has swallowed death.

Can you put the scripture, can you read this with me again? Read verse four with me? For while we are still in this tent, we groan being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Not because there's something special in me, but because when I put my hands in the hands of Jesus, that he would be my savior and that he would be my lord, he takes me, because he will cast no one away.

And as he takes me, then he who was swallowed by death, but it turns out that ultimately he swallowed death himself.

[32 : 45] Life swallowed death. Death is not the final word. Nothing is not the final word. Love and grace and mercy and justice and life and God himself, the Lord Jesus Christ is the final word.

It swallows death. Life swallows death. And when I am in him and he is in me, and friends, when he is in you and you are in him, the day of our death is the day that we are swallowed by life.

Could you put up the third point, Andrew? Every human being, I think, has that intimation and intuition, in fact, well, I'll say it, love and life are stronger than death because Jesus is stronger than

death.

Love and life are stronger than death because Jesus is stronger than death. We all have this intuition.

I think every human being has an intuition in the face of death that there's something wrong with it, there's something not right with it. Every human being has, I think, some intuition that love, although it seems to lose to death and life seems to lose to death, that there must be something about love and life that is in fact stronger and more important than death.

[34 : 24] And all they are for most people are intuitions. They're intuitions for us. But our belief in this isn't based on intuition. intuition in the context of God doing something and revealing something to show that in fact these intuitions are correct and to call us to call out to God for mercy.

Can you put up the next point, Andrew? Notice in verse 5, he who has prepared us for this very thing that's been swallowed up by life, this groaning for something more.

He who has prepared us for this very thing is God who has given us the spirit as a guarantee. God grows a longing in his children to be swallowed up by life.

God grows a longing in his children to be swallowed up by life. And some of you might say, I'd like to have that longing, George, I don't know if I have it.

I guess I have two things to say. The first is that you should pray for it. Like, make it part of your daily prayers. Lord, I'm afraid that somehow death is more powerful, and that hatred is more powerful, and chaos is more powerful, and I'm afraid of that, that somehow it is.

[35 : 48] It seems as if in my job, or in my house, and in my body, those things are more powerful. And I'd love to have this type of longing, even occasionally, Father, I'd love to have this longing.

And so pray to the Father about that, and ask him to begin to grow within you that which he's promised through his word, that he'll grow a longing for these things in you. Call out to him in prayer.

But the other thing that you need to do is to be gripped by the gospel. you see, the longings and the yearnings come out of an ever greater sense of what it is that Jesus did for us on the cross.

As the cross and his death and erection becomes more real to our hearts, these longings and yearnings become in a sense more natural as a byproduct of it.

And so ask that the Father would help the gospel to become more real to you. Think about Jesus and his death upon the cross. Think about the fact that he knew every single thing there is to know about you and still he loved you so much and loves you so much that he would be willing to die upon the cross.

[37 : 03] That in fact, no matter how much you might feel in your life, that nobody loves you, the fact of the matter is, is that from the time you were conceived, Jesus has known you and he has loved you more than you could possibly imagine and he loved you so much that he died for you on the cross.

You are loved beyond your imagining in a costly love that took him to the cross to die. And faith in Christ is in a sense finally stopping to run from Jesus and to turn to face him and to put down all the things that we trust in and all of the things that we think we need to accomplish and just saying, Lord, have mercy.

Take me as your own. I don't want to run from you anymore and I don't want to try to impress you and I don't even really feel worthy, but your word says that you'll take me and I want to be yours.

I know that I need you to be my Savior and my Lord. And Jesus turns no one away. In fact, if you could put up the next point, Andrew, God himself guarantees my resurrection to be with him.

Notice that in verse 5? He who has prepared us for this very thing is God who has given us the spirit as a guarantee. You know, just think about this for a second.

[38 : 29] If God ordered a pizza, would he be able to pay for it? Yeah. He could pay for a pizza. If God called up and says, you know, I won't give any company credit, sent me a pizza, you know he's going to pay.

He's given us this guarantee. And he's proved this guarantee by the death and resurrection of his son. My time is almost up. And I have two more things I want to say.

I'm just going to say something very, very briefly to try to wrap it up within a couple of minutes. A couple of weeks ago, I don't like telling stories like this because it makes me look like I'm a better guy than I actually am.

I'm a very strong introvert and I was just telling somebody that when I fly on the plane occasionally I have this misfortune of sitting beside somebody on a plane that knows me.

And I'm not making this up. It happened to me just in August when I had to fly to Vancouver and I ended up sitting beside somebody I knew and I told them, I'm really sorry it's nothing personal but I don't talk to people on airplanes.

[39 : 36] I really need this introverted quiet time to get some work done and so I'm not going to talk to you. They were pretty shocked. You know, so I'm not one of those guys that goes on the plane and tries to convert the whole plane.

Anyway, so just to counterbalance this story, one of the Starbucks I go to regularly, there's this mentally handicapped man who started coming with his helper. And he's one of these mentally handicapped men, he's probably in his 50s, and he goes up to people and says hi to them and tries to shake their hand.

Now, Canadians, when a mentally bit disheveled, definitely not well coiffed, mentally handicapped man comes and thrusts his hand out to you, a lot of Canadians do this, right?

And then some of them, they realize when I'm a Canadian, I'm not supposed to do this, and then they sort of take his hand. Anyway, about a month or so ago, a month and a half ago, he happened to sit beside me and he shook my hand and I shook his hand and I asked him his name, told me his name.

And so then two weeks later, he comes in the restaurant and as he's walking by, I stand up, put my hand out to him and say hi, I'm going to call him Bob, hi Bob.

[40 : 55] and he looks startled and turns around, shakes my hand and smiles at me and he goes off to the seat with his helper. After the service, after the, at the end of the, as they were leaving, the helper came up to me and said, you don't know how much that meant to me, that you remembered his name and that he initiated a conversation with him because everywhere he goes, he's friendly, just the way he is.

And most Canadians don't even want to talk to him and often when they see him coming in another time, they try to look another way to make sure he doesn't shake their hand. You remembered his name, it meant a lot to me.

And so then we get talking and she says, I notice that you often sit there with a Bible and big books, like are you a pastor or something like that? And I say that I am and she has a few things to say about me and my type of Anglican and stuff like that.

But then she's leaving and as part of her explanation as to why she's no longer an Anglican and she's spiritual, she says, you know, it's all yin and yang.

Like I'm a spiritual person, it's just a matter of accepting the yin and yang of life. And I said to her, you don't believe that, do you? And she said, no, I really do.

[42 : 17] I said, no, you don't believe that. You don't believe that love and hatred are the same, that death and life are the same. You don't believe that it's just the same for me to know Bob and shake his hand as it would be if I came up and punched Bob.

You don't believe that. You're working probably for not very much money to spend time with guys like Bob. You don't believe in yin and yang.

nothing. This entire text is a profound refutation of Buddhism and Hinduism. It's profound complete and utter denial of all of those things.

Those religions, what do they tell you? Lose your desire and at the end you become nothing. And what does the Bible say? Grow your desire.

Grow your desire for life. Grow your desire for love. And at the end there is a house not made with hands that is yours in heaven forever in the new heaven and the new earth.

[43 : 27] That's what you desire. And in a culture that thinks that after you die you just become nothing, whether it's a Hindu or Buddhist society or whether it's our secular society, death grows in that culture.

Death grows because people don't have any value. Because at the end, what does it really matter? You just amuse yourself until the end. And we try to amuse ourselves until the end.

At the same time we have these intuitions that love does matter, that life does matter, that goodness does matter, that we are to live on them, that we praise somebody for remembering a mentally handicapped man's name and treating him like a person and a person of value and not as someone who qualifies for doctor assisted suicide or that if you knew that he was going to be like

that in the womb, that you would have him aborted.

Because this teaching, it grounds the importance of human beings from the moment of their conception to the moment of their death. People matter to God.

God. And that's what this text is teaching us. And it's teaching us that if the world is telling you, if your family is telling you, if your boss is telling you that you are nothing, nothing is not the final word about you.

[44 : 56] Put your faith and trust in Jesus. You matter to him. You matter to God. God. God. God. God. God. God. God. God. God. God. You matter to him.

You matter to God. And one of the things which is, here just brought up the seventh point, not the sixth one, Andrew, one of the things which is so important about this text is that the more that you know that you are loved by Christ and cannot lose, the more courage you have to live and to choose life.

The more that you know that you are loved by Christ and cannot lose. Why can't you lose? Because it's not my hands or yours that are making my body in the new heaven and the new earth.

My hands have nothing to do with it. God's doing it. It's secure in him. My destiny is secure in the hands of Jesus. Not my hands, but his.

His hands that will take me still bear the scars of the nails that hung him to the cross. Those are the hands that reached down to take me.

[46 : 15] Died for me. I matter to him. Nothing is not the final word about me. Nothing is not the final word of the most handicapped person, the oldest and weakest person, the poorest person.

people matter to God. And the more that you know that you are loved by Christ and cannot lose, the more courage you have to live, to choose life, to choose love.

Please stand. Father, you know some people here, some of us are maybe really have been struggling coming in here, thinking like we're nothing, thinking like we're becoming more invisible as we get older.

Father, you know maybe there are some people here struggling with cutting themselves as a way to try to maybe deal with their emotional pain or the chaos in their life or just to maybe feel alive as they become invisible.

Father, you know those of us who are struggling with things like cutting. You know, Father, those of us who are struggling with worry about the diminishment of age.

[47 : 46] We ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel. And as we are gripped by the gospel, help us, Father, to learn to live with courage to choose life, to face each day with courage choosing life and living for your glory and not for our own.

We give you thanks and praise that if we die, Father, before your Son has returned, that the moment that we are swallowed by death, apparently, is in fact the moment that we are most fully and completely swallowed by life, and that you have prepared for us an existence as resurrected people in resurrected bodies to live with you forever, and that is sure.

Father, fan into flame within us a longing and yearning for this. As we are gripped by the gospel, and this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.