

# The End & the Beginning

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[0:00] I was trying to decide how much background I had to give to this movie analogy to start the sermon. But just in case you're not familiar with movie stars, Will Smith is a very tall, muscular African-American actor who often acts in action films.

And Tom Cruise is a very short, white guy who often acts in movies, often as an action hero. I don't know, probably on stilts or something like that.

So they don't sort of show how short he is. Anyway, there's this couple, true story, this couple, quite a few years ago, in fact it was the year 2004. They decided that the two big movies that were at the time was Collateral, starring Tom Cruise, and I, Robot, starring Will Smith.

Collateral, modern day movie about a cab driver who picks up a hitman. Then, I, Robot, in the future, futuristic things, fighting robots, the whole thing. The I, Robot movie stars Will Smith.

The other movie, Tom Cruise. They said, we're going to go out and see which one of the two movies we'll see. I don't know which one of the two movies we'll see. Let's see the Tom Cruise movie. The woman says, yeah, I really like Tom Cruise. Let's go see the Tom Cruise movie.

[1:13] And so the guy gets the tickets. True story. The two of them go into the movie. The movie starts about 45 minutes into the movie. The woman says to the man, this is a very, very odd Tom Cruise movie.

He hasn't shown up in the movie at all. They were sitting in the I, Robot movie. And it took the woman 45 minutes to realize that she wasn't watching a Tom Cruise movie set in present day North America, but watching a futuristic film starring Will Smith.

And they had some words afterwards because he'd sort of just unilaterally made the last minute decision that he'd rather see I, Robot, and didn't tell her. But it's funny that she was able to sit there for 45 minutes puzzling through why this futuristic science fiction movie starring Will Smith was actually a Tom Cruise movie.

Now, I mention that because one of the things is that we actually always sort of understand that we live our lives in terms of some overarching story.

And things called worldviews are just a different sort of different ways to understand an overarching type of story. And so maybe our overarching story is, you know, you die, that's it.

[2:34] So basically, since when you die, that's it, you just sort of have to grab as many toys or just sort of get what you want in this life. Enjoy every moment as you have because you're just going to die and that's it. Maybe it's that you're going to end up, you know, merging with God.

But there's a variety of different stories. And it really, really matters that we understand the story, that if there is, in fact, a true story that we can be in. And if we sort of think we're in one story when we're in another story, then it means we're going to always be sort of not quite getting what's going on.

Things in reality and things in life aren't going to sort of fit or make sense. And I think that's a small sort of an example of that, apart from the Tom Cruise thing. I, the other day I was in a, I was in a Starbucks and I happened to be sitting by a chair that had, had a plug.

And I could see this young woman, she'd just gotten a table and she was trying to see if her computer cord would be long enough to get into the plug. And I noticed her distress and I offered to trade places with her.

And she said, you sure? I said, yeah, I use this spectacular ancient invention called paper that doesn't require any batteries. And, uh, cause I, I do all my sermon notes in a book.

[3:47] In fact, in this book, uh, the way I work it is I, I make all my notes. If you're ever to steal the book, you'd see my notes begin, uh, sort of, um, back and back and back here. I make my notes, I put my reflections, et cetera.

And then eventually I put my outline all, all in the same book. Uh, but when I'm working on several sermons at the same time, uh, which I'm doing right now because I'm doing some pre-work on 1 Thessalonians 5, then occasionally in the midst of all of these notes, I'll, I'll make a little note at the top of the page.

Uh, and it let me know that I'm actually in that page working on another text. So just yesterday I'm in the Starbucks trying to finish my, put my sermon together. And I'm, I'm going through, I'm going from page to page to page.

And I come to a page and I'm starting to figure out, I'm looking at these notes and it says, um, forgiveness is key to a choice between fight and flight. Verse 13, verse 3, verse 15, and evil. Forgiveness means a type of death that was sacrificed. And I'm looking in Revelation chapter 22, verses 3 and 15. And I'm thinking to myself, how on earth did I get that from that?

[ 4 : 53 ] Like, what was I doing? And then I look at the next notes, you know, verse 1 and verse 11, encourage and build up and the tension and superiority. And I'm like, how on earth does that get in Revelation?

And then I realize I'm looking at my notes for 1 Thessalonians 5. And, um, and, and, and, and that's what often happens in life. That, um, um, it's one of the things that, that for Christians, it's partly how you grow as a Christian, is that there's a whole pile of stories going on in the world.

And these stories that go on in the world are trying to help you to understand your life and the meaning of your life and the purpose and the direction of your life. And Jesus isn't just somebody who comes into your life and sort of adds a little bit of extra flavor or value to your life.

Jesus is part of a different story. And not only then, so many of us, when we come to faith in Jesus, it begins with us just sort of coming to a faith in Jesus.

Uh, for myself, it was just this sense that there was a, an incompleteness and a lack in my life. And I had this sense of Jesus as a type of fullness. And I, I needed that type of fullness.

[ 6 : 04 ] And I knew that, that by coming to him, that, that I just needed to come to him for some type of fullness. But, but partly what happens as we come to faith in Jesus is that we slowly start to understand that Jesus is part of a large story.

And that God wants us to understand that story because it's the true story. And that true story is the one that will actually make sense of our experience.

That it will make sense of, of the mystery of suffering. That it will make sense of the mystery of sacrifice. That it will make sense of the mystery of death. That it will make sense of the mystery of marriage and of relationships.

That it will make sense of the mystery of, of the body. It will make sense of the mystery of sex. That it will make sense of the, of the mystery of good and evil. that it will make sense of the mystery of beauty and of longings and of yearnings, that it's not just that Jesus sort of comes in and gives us a little bit of dose of peace and religion as we live the different stories that are going on in the world, but he slowly, as we draw closer to him and he gets a greater hold of us, he tries to help us to understand that the world's stories have parts in it that are true, but parts that are very, very confused or maybe even wrong, and that there is this different story, a true story that we're in the middle of that Jesus is central to, that once we start to understand, then we start to understand these other mysteries of suffering, of sex, of death, of sacrifice, of family, of the body, the mystery of money, the mystery of meaning.

And we've been going through the book of Revelation, and Revelation chapter 22 is the very, very end of the Bible, and it's, Revelation is the last book in the Bible, and Revelation 22 is the very, very last bit of the book of Revelation in the whole Bible.

[ 8 : 05 ] And so it tells us the last bit of the story, and it does so in such a way that even as it tells us the last bit of the story, it communicates a bit of a sense of the mystery of the person, of the face, of the body, of our longings and of our yearnings.

So it would be a great help to me if you would turn in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 22, Revelation chapter 22, and we'll look very briefly at this last, very, very, very last piece of the Bible, which is all part of telling the overarching story of the Bible, which Christians believe is not just a true story for Christians, but is truly true, and it helps us to make sense and understand human experience and human life, that it starts to help to make meaning out of our life.

Revelation chapter 22, beginning at the first verse. And, yeah. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Through the middle of the street of the city. Sorry, I didn't read that very well. I'll start again. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

It was flowing through the middle of the street of the city, also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its 12 kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

[ 9 : 37 ] No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and the Lamb will be in it, and the servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads, and night will be no more.

They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. And we'll just sort of pause there.

And actually, in the way that the book of Revelation is written, in some ways this is the end of the book of the Revelation with verse 5. After verse 5, there's no more sort of, and then I saw and then I heard, and there's no more series of visions.

It's as if the story, this is the last vision with verse 5. And then verses 6 to 21, it's a little bit like, depending on your age, like for us, maybe we have our son or our daughter come, and maybe they're going to go off on a trip.

Maybe they have their grandchildren with them. And it's really easy when they're going off on a trip for Louise and me to say, oh, did you forget the granola bars? Do you have the water? Do you have enough diapers?

[ 10 : 46 ] Don't forget to call. Like a whole range of things. And in some ways, that's how the book of Revelation ends with verse 5. And verses 6 to 21, it's as if Jesus and the angels are saying to John, okay, before you go, don't forget this.

Don't forget this. Don't forget this. Don't forget this. Do you have this? And it's trying to summarize these last little things, but this is the last vision.

And here, if you put it up on the screen, Andrew, here's the thing. In the city is a garden, and in the garden, I will see God face to face, and then the new beginning will begin.

What's happening in verses 1 to 5 is that in the city is a garden, and in the garden, I will see God face to face, and then the new beginning will begin. That's how the book of Revelation ends.

About two or three weeks ago, I talked about how two of the big images to help us to understand heaven is the marriage of the church, the bride of Christ, to Jesus, and then the other thing is an image of the feast.

[ 11 : 52 ] And then last week, we looked a little bit how, in the end, what's described is definitely not that human beings will be like angels or be like spirits, but that God brings in a new heaven and earth.

And he doesn't bring in a new heaven and a new earth. He brings in a new heaven and earth. It implies that there's a type of a unity or a mixing or a fitting together of what we now understand as heaven and what we now understand as earth, that the two of them will somehow be at one somehow, that they'll fit with each other, they'll be different, but at the same time, there'll be a type of a peacefulness between them, and an ability for us as human beings to both be in heaven and in earth and still have bodies.

And that the fundamental image of what this new heaven and new earth, the new heaven and new earth will be like, is that we human beings will live in the city, the city of God. And the city is described as being immense.

And I talked about how what the Bible is trying to let us know is that at the end of the end of the end, which is also the beginning, that I will live in this city.

You will live in this city. Those who are redeemed by Jesus will live in this city. And I will be a neighbor to others who live in the city. And I will be a neighbor.

[ 13 : 13 ] They will, and there will be neighborhoods, so to speak, so there's, we all have neighbors, and God will be everybody's neighbor. So that it's not as if you can move to some distant suburb to get as far away from God as you possibly can.

But that the new heaven and earth will be a city where people live, where we have neighbors, where we will be a neighbor ourselves, and where everybody has God as his neighbor.

And then the final part of this vision is that in the city is a garden. In the garden, I will see God face to face, and then the new beginning will begin. And if you go back later on as part of your private

devotions and read Genesis chapter 3, you'll see that many parts of Revelation chapter 22, verses 1 to 5, are paired or matched with what goes on in Genesis 3.

That the things that God will take away are the things that come into human life as a result of Adam and Eve's fall. That at the end of Genesis chapter 3, Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden, and an angel is there to stop them from the tree of life.

And here we see that the tree of life has now become trees of life, and that the trees of life are accessible to everybody in the city, and that we will eat of its fruit.

[14:32] And it's a wonderful, wonderful image of what it is that we're called for, what the end of the story is. That we will live, that God originally intended us with all of the power of that story of Genesis 3, that we could be with other human beings, and you could be completely and utterly naked, and be completely and utterly unashamed.

That the things that characterize our human life right now, that on one hand, we know they characterize us, but on the other hand, we know that it shouldn't characterize us. On one hand, we know that there's walls and masks that we make for other people.

At the same time, we know that there shouldn't be walls or masks. We have on one hand a desire for walls or masks, on the other hand, a desire to have no walls or masks, that what we understand is really being loved, is being able to be with another person or a friend.

Friendship or love is being able to be with another person where some of the walls and some of the masks that characterize our lives are let down so that the other person can see us as we really are and yet not turn away in disgust or anger or embarrassment as they see us as we really are.

And so here we see that at the end of the end of the end, which is also truly a beginning, that I will be able to stand, not based on my own righteousness, but on what Jesus has done for me, that I will stand in the city where I have neighbors and God is my neighbor and there will be a garden and I will be in that garden and I can look at God face to face and I will no longer have any masks and I will no longer have any walls and I will be completely and fully known and I will begin the eternal quest and journey of knowing the unending God.

[16:27] And if I stand before God face to face, I stand before God face to face in a garden not by myself but with other human beings who are likewise seeing God without masks and without walls and are able to stand there unashamed and we do that together which means we start through seeing God face to face to be able to see each other face to face.

You see, even in this story, we sort of have this understanding that it starts to make a sense of why it is that the whole biblical story of us being fallen, of evil coming into the world, of us being bent, of our contradictory desires to build walls for protection yet at the same time that we would have no walls, to build masks to protect us but at the same time that there would be no masks and it pictures that day when we will see God face to face and we will stand before him unashamed.

And the wonderful thing about this image, look, it's a very, very funny thing. Look at verse 2, the last part of it, the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations and heaven is the great healing.

I know a man who was sick and he had cancer and he was praying that he would be healed of this cancer and I'm going to probably get this story wrong, I should have written it down rather than just trying to remember it from my notes but he said that he was going to be healed.

He believed that he was going to be healed. He believed that the chemotherapy would work so he would be healed very slowly or he believed that God could do a miracle he could be healed quickly or he would die and he would be healed finally and fully and eternally but either way he knew he was going to be healed and heaven is always pictured as a place of healing, of health, of life, of light.

[18:27] that that is what heaven will be like but here's the thing with the nations. When we get to heaven we won't all be white. We won't all be black. We won't all be Asian.

We won't all be First Nation. Like we won't be, we won't all become one color. Like what makes us as human beings right now is a combination of community and angularity.

That's what makes us human beings right now. A combination of community and angularity. By angularity I mean it's like a snowflake that I've been told that all snowflakes are different and snowflakes are angular and we all know that we have pointy bits and part of the problem and challenge of marriage is how do you get pointy bits of two pointy angular people to actually become one and some things fit well and some things don't fit very well and that's part of the challenge of marriage.

It's part of the challenge of friendship. It's part of the challenge of churches. It's part of the challenge of community that we're all angular individuals which mean that because we're completely and utterly ourselves and completely angular that there's we're a whole mass of pointy bits but at the same time we don't speak six billion languages or however many human beings there are on the planet that there's something communal about us and something angular and we see this the word that's translated in as nations is really the word which should really be translated as people group. It's from where we get ethnic from and so this even in heaven we see that in some ways George will be in heaven I will be in heaven with all my angularity all my recognizable angularity but without masks and without walls and I will be able to see God face to face I will be able to stand in his presence and I will stand in all my perfected angularity and yet there will be this sense of community because I am part of one nation that Canadian nation that particular people group and I will be there with my brothers and sisters from North Korea and China and Iran and Kenya and the United States I will be there with hipsters who become Christians and street people who become Christians and billionaires who become Christians and Down Syndrome and so even in this picture of the Garden of Eden is now in a city and that the tree of life is there and we partake of it that what we actually experience throughout all of eternity is a on one hand it's a type of a growing but on the other hand it's a type of a healing that it only means that there's more health that comes into me that's the point of the image that right now on this side of the grave that what comes into me in a sense is more death as I age but in heaven what comes into me as I age in quotation marks is more health and as I receive more and more health and more and more life

[ 21 : 53 ] I remain angular and I remain in a community and I see God face to face and that friends is what we were made and designed for you see the Christian story which we believe is the true story is that God made all things good put us in the garden that human beings because of our particular unique place in the entire created order we chose to separate ourselves from God to turn away from God to become God's ourselves that's what's described in Genesis chapter three and by so we do doing so we became bent not broken but bent fallen no longer perfect you can see glimpses of perfection but at the same time that we are bent now turned away from God and turned in in ourselves and that all of from Genesis chapter four right up to the end of chapter Malachi is the age of promise that God will come and do something to deal with our bentness that we cannot possibly fix ourselves and the gospels are the story of

God keeping his promise and God keeps his promise in a surprising way actually could you put the fifth point up now jump ahead God keeps his promise in a very surprising way the cross of Christ is how the tree of life comes into a fallen world in Genesis chapter three we are excluded from the tree of life and the angel stops us from coming and what the gospels tell us in a sense what Revelation 22 tells us is that the cross of Christ is how the tree of life comes into a fallen world and what God first deals with is our fundamental separation from him and he's going to have his people live in this time that goes from in a sense Acts 1 until

Revelation 19 or whatever which is the already not yet where on one hand because when I partake of Christ I am partaking of the tree of life when I put my faith and trust in Christ I am partaking of the tree of life when I when I when I come to Jesus I come to the tree of life that that makes me clean that gives me health that restores my relationship with God that the cross of Christ is the tree of life come into a fallen world in Revelation chapter 22 the tree of life will not look like the cross but the tree of life in our fallen world is the cross of Christ and then Acts chapter 1 right up to Revelation chapter 19 if in a sense the story begins with God making a created perfect created order which means that we have a proper type of longing and yearning for God a proper type of longing and yearning for good it means that when evil comes in that all evil is a bent good that evil in a sense has no positive existence that all evil is a bent misdirected good it's a it's an emptiness of good a place where good should be where it has been removed it's a but it's always a bent good and then the promise of deliverer the deliverer

God keeps his promise in the gospels and now we live in this period of time called the already not yet but then God finishes his promises with the coming of his son a second time and the book of revelation describes both how we live in the already not yet but how that final coming of the son will appear and how he will look and the closing message of the book of revelation that we are going to see in a moment is that Jesus can come at any time one of the reasons that I throughout these 28 weeks that I've been preaching through the book of revelation that I preach in such a way that I've not focused on all the minute little supposed details of what it will be at the last time because I think

we'll see in a moment when we finish reading the book of revelation the message that Jesus wants to communicate to us in the book of revelation is to always be ready for him to return and never to have this sense well we don't have to worry about it because the beast hasn't arisen or we never have to worry about that because the false prophet hasn't arisen arisen but always be this sense that God who is sovereign that his son could come at any time and he brings in the new heaven and earth and we will dwell and it will be as if there is the marriage of the church with Jesus it will be as if there is this unending feast it will be as if we live in a city and in the center of the city there is a garden in the garden there is a tree of life and we will recognize as we partake of the tree of life that it is of the exact same substance that we receive from

Jesus because the cross of Christ is the tree of life in a fallen world and then from the point of view of Revelation chapter 22 verse 5 it is the end it is the end of the visions but for us it is but a beginning Revelation 22 5 beckons and invites us to go in the words of C.S. Lewis farther up and deeper in and we will do that with others in bodies and we get a small glimpse of what our heavenly bodies will be like from the miracles of new creation the gospel where there will be a completely and utterly different relationship of our soul to our body and our soul and body to the world around us where we will not long for bad things we will not long for bent things and just as Jesus was able to walk on water in some ways that's a picture of how we will relate to the natural order and just as [ 27 : 55 ] Jesus is able to appear through walls in some ways that is a picture of what it will be for us in this new heaven and the new heaven and earth and just as Jesus on the mount of transfiguration was completely and utterly transfigured and transformed before the disciples in the scene with glory in some way that describes that will describe us describe us and our eternal destiny in Jesus when we partake of the cross of Christ which is how the tree of life comes into a fallen world I only have a few more minutes left because of our time constraints so I want to just let's look at these last six verses the last 16 verses I'll just read through them very quickly and give you a few points if you could put the second point up now Andrew that would be great be mindful of this point as I read that most of the rest of the chapter of verses 6 to 21 wants to communicate this to us that Jesus is the alpha and the omega the

Lord and the Lamb true and trustworthy and his word is true and trustworthy so I am learning to trust and keep his word written that's what that's what is being communicated these last few verses that Jesus is the alpha and the omega the Lord and the Lamb true and trustworthy and his word is true and trustworthy so I am learning to trust and keep his word written this is how it goes and he said to me these words are trustworthy and true and the Lord the God of the spirits of the prophets has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place and behold I am coming soon blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book I John am the one who heard and saw these things and when I heard and saw them I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me but he said to me you must not do that so you might I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets and with those who keep the words of this book worship God we don't worship a church we don't worship the emperor we don't worship an institution we don't worship rituals we don't worship a prayer book we don't worship the Bible we don't worship angels we don't worship politicians we don't worship ideologies we don't worship philosophies we don't worship the nation we don't worship our ethnic group we don't worship our social class we don't worship our education we don't worship our money we don't worship our power We don't worship our parents.

We don't worship our ancestors. Worship God. Worship God. Worship God. Verse 10.

They said to me, Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoers still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.

[ 30 : 54 ] The heart of this idea that Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Lord and the Lamb, true and trustworthy, and his word is true and trustworthy, so I am learning to trust and keep his word written, is that the Bible is not for the anointed.

It's not for the Illuminati. It's not for the brilliant. It's not for the university educated. It's not for those who have high IQs. It's not for Canadians. It's not for white people.

It's not for Europeans. The Bible is an open revelation. It's an open secret.

Public truth. And Christians have always understood that God's desire is that these words can be translated into the heart language of every person on the planet.

To be a really, truly good Jew, you need to learn Hebrew. To be a truly good Muslim, you need to learn 7th century Arabic. We as Christians have to understand that we have to translate the Bible into the heart language of the peoples of the planet because God desires his revelation to be an open revelation of public truth for the servant girl and the woman who owns a billion-dollar company, for the guy who fixes your tap and the guy who invents taps.

[ 32 : 33 ] It needs to be an open truth. To put up the next thing, Jesus says to his church, go, and the Spirit-filled church says, come.

That's sort of, just sort of, I'm having a, I'm running out of time. I have to sort of put them all together. How do the nations all know to come to the guard to be healed? Because the church goes.

The church goes. And when we go, we say, come to Jesus. That's going to continue reading. Verse 12. Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me to repay everyone for what he has done.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those who wash their robes so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

I'm going to talk about this in a moment. Outside of the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and the murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches.

[ 33 : 35 ] I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star. Here's the thing for that point. The spirit and the bride say, come. And let everyone who hears say, come. And let the one who is thirsty, come.

The one who desires to take the water of the life without price, take it. See here in verse 17, the spirit and the bride say, come. It's this idea that we go to the nations.

We go to the people groups. We go and we try to prayerfully discern their heart language. And when we go, we tell them, come to Jesus.

That's the message and that's the task of the true church. It's what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit works through scripture, works through fallen, incomplete, finite human beings like us to say to the world, come.

And when people hear about Jesus, God's heart and desire is that we will say, Jesus, come. That put up the next slide, please. The heart of God is revealed.

[ 34 : 39 ] His heart is that I will cry out to him. So be it. Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Lord Jesus. Look at verse 20.

He who testifies to these things says, surely I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Lord Jesus. It's the cry of a person's heart to become a Christian, to be born again, is to say, so be it.

So your word is true. Come, Lord Jesus, into my life. It's how we grow in discipleship to understand in the context of our job and our family and our relationships to say, come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Jesus as Lord. Jesus means God saves. You who save, who comes from God, come and save and be my Lord. Come into my situation today.

Come into my finances. Come into my sexuality. Come into my community. Come into my relationships. Come into my friendships. Come into my memories. Come into my dreams for the future.

[ 35 : 45 ] Come into my strengths. Come into my weaknesses. Come into my shame. Come and come, Jesus, to be the Savior and come to be the Lord.

So be it. Come, Lord Jesus. You see, the evangelistic heart of God is said, is that even if some of us might say, George, this is, this is, you know, when it talks about sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood, George, that's describing me.

But I, the world doesn't understand these things as any of them as being bad. They, in fact, they think it's sort of normal to be interested in spells and, and, and so, are the words of the Bible just creating distance between me and, me and God?

It's possible for us to read the Bible in such a way that distance is created, but God desires us to hear the words of the Bible and our response is not to be, God doesn't want to have anything to do with me.

The response that God desires is that we will say, Amen, come Lord Jesus. That's the response that God desires us to have, to say, Amen, come Lord Jesus.

[ 37 : 12 ] Please stand. Father, we give you thanks and praise that, um, you have made us so that when we come to faith in Jesus that we move towards, that you, you, you bring that final healing towards us that you are preparing us for an eternal weight of glory, that you are preparing us to be able to stand before you face to face, uh, unashamed with no walls and no dividers, no masks, that you are preparing us to spend, uh, eternity with you as our neighbor face to face with other neighbors.

We give you thanks and praise that you are calling us to this eternal life in you. We ask, Father, that you fan in flames within us a longing and yearning to know you, to see you, to see you face to face, to long and yearn for that day when there are no more masks, when there is no more death, when there is nothing left that is bent, but that we partake of your goodness in all of its fullness. And this we ask in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior. Amen.