

The Second Coming and Jesus

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- [0 : 0 0] Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, we ask that you bring the truths of your word home to our heart.
- And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So, I discovered that I have a four-year-old granddaughter who is a profound, systematic theologian over the Christmas holidays.
- And in some ways, this story which I'm about to tell you, I could almost say at the end of it, let's stand and pray and move on. Although we probably shouldn't pack it, and I will.
- So, I've forgotten this. I guess when people are playing rock, paper, scissors, they go, rock, paper, scissors, shoot. They go, rock, paper, scissors, shoot.
- At least that's how my granddaughter played it. And when you say shoot, you're supposed to put out, you know, the paper, the rock, or the scissors. So, my young granddaughter is playing this with one of her older siblings.
- [1 : 1 4] And my son is sort of watching them in the mirror as they play, and they're giggling and having fun. And then the older sibling decides that she's going to play a trick on the younger one.
- So, they go, rock, paper, scissors, shoot. And I don't know what it is that my younger granddaughter put out, but the older one did this at her. And she pouted and said, what is that?
- And the older one said, that's a gun. Guns beat rock, papers, and scissors. So, my four-year-old granddaughter pouted and sort of looked like she's trying to think in her mind how she's going to get her older sibling.
- So, she said, let's play a game. So, you do rock, paper, scissors, shoot. But this time when they say shoot, the four-year-old put her hand up like this and yelled, Jesus.
- And the older child said, what does that mean? And the younger one said, only the way a four-year-old girl sort of being pouty and whatever can say.
- [2 : 2 2] That's Jesus. Jesus beats everything. So, in some ways when we talk about the second coming of Jesus, my four-year-old granddaughter has summarized the whole teaching right there.
- Jesus beats everything. Now, having said that, and I could just end it up, we also have to acknowledge, of course, we need to look at the Bible a little bit and see why it's a fair summary.
- But we need to remember that as well, of course, that in our day, saying that we believe in the second coming of Christ is seen as kooky. If I was a stand-up like laugh from the audience, I would just have to come out and say, my neighbor thinks Jesus is coming again.
- And everybody would laugh. And then he could make, or she could make, or me, if it's me, it'd be he. I could make a couple of other little comments, and every one of them around the idea that Jesus is returning a second time, that somehow that will be taken in the air.

Everything you would say about that, you wouldn't have to be very funny. You would just have to say it, and the audience would laugh. And that's the culture, and that's the world we live in.

[3 : 31] It's actually sort of funny that that's how the world views the idea. And it's sort of funny for two reasons. One is, it's scientifically true that the world will come to an end.

I mean, this is the uncomfortable truth that is hidden from us. But the fact of the matter is, is according to modern science, a time will come when our Earth will be swallowed up by the sun, and that even if we are able to find some other planet, and we're able to go there, at some point in time, the entire universe will cease to exist.

That's just, in fact, what science tells us. The other thing which is sort of odd about many in our culture thinking the idea of the second coming of Christ is kooky, is that our culture is obsessed with the future.

Like, literally, we are obsessed with the future. We are obsessed with thinking that we know the future. We are obsessed with using economic and scientific types of things to try to predict the future.

We are obsessed with things that go on in the climate and other types of things that indicate that if certain things don't get done, then there'll be the end of civilization and life as we know it.

[4 : 47] Like, our culture at the elite levels is literally obsessed with it. And if you don't believe that, just imagine if one of you was to run for parliament and just say, by the way, I think climate change is complete and utter bunk, and then you go through a whole pile of other things that you think are bunk.

Well, good luck with getting elected. Well, that's not true. You get elected in certain ridings, but you definitely wouldn't win the Canadian election. Our culture is obsessed with it. And even the fact that we talk about people having progressive politics, progressive implies progressing towards something, which implies that somebody thinks they know, knows what the end is, that they somehow know.

I mean, the fact is that, of course, that we have no idea what's going to happen tomorrow. Like, literally, we have no idea what's going to happen tomorrow. Like, literally, we don't. So, but it's in that, but the fact is, we live in a world where our culture thinks to talk about the last days is kooky, and that can infect us as Christians to either then talk about it incessantly ourselves or to not want to talk about it at all.

So, we have before us a text today where Jesus talks about his second coming. So, let's look and see what he says. And he says some things which are very, very, very surprising.

So, let's turn in our Bibles to Mark chapter 13. And we're going to begin earlier than the part I read. We're going to begin at verse 1. And here's how it goes.

[6 : 16] And as Jesus came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, look, teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings. And Jesus said to him, do you see these great buildings?

There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. Now, this would have been a very surprising thing for Jesus to have said to them.

The temple in those days was actually a remarkable, like, it might have been the greatest, if not the greatest, it was one of the greatest architectural feats of that time in the ancient world.

The size of the stones that were brought in to make the temple, the stones were huge. If you ever get to go to Jerusalem and go for a bit of a tour, they'll show you one of the stones that's part of the original wall or part of the original building.

And it's absolutely massive. Like, it's from here to there and higher, like, higher than that and it's like, you know, it's like 10 feet thick and they maneuvered these things all together to make this unbelievable edifice.

[7 : 28] But, Jesus says, they're all going to be thrown down. Now, here's our first little problem when we read this, especially if we are familiar with what goes on in the Twitter verse and the TikTok verse and the Instagram and Facebook world, is, well, here's the problem.

What Jesus said came true less than 40 years after he said it. Like, it came true. In 70, the year 70, the Romans defeated the Jewish people and tore the temple down.

So, less than 40 years, 40 years or less, after he said that this became, this in fact was true. So, many people will say that, of course, what happened is that Jesus didn't say this but after the fall of Jerusalem, they went and Mark, guys like Mark, wrote beforehand to make it look like Jesus prophesied the future.

And they'll normally say something like, and you can't prove it otherwise. Well, that's not entirely true. I mean, the fundamental issue is, well, actually, what the issue is is that the issue is really whether the triune God of Christianity exists or not.

And if the triune God of Christianity doesn't exist, then there's no reason to believe that you could possibly say something about the future that's true. Like, that's, I think, a fair point.

[8 : 57] The question is, though, is whether, in fact, the God of, the triune God of Christianity is true. And if he is true, there's no reason at all why he might not be able to tell a particular person or reveal to a person something that's going to be true in the future.

Now, you can't then look at evidence to discuss this issue but then rule out all prophecies. Like, if you actually want to try to figure out the answer, you have to look at the issue.

You can't just rule out certain types of conclusions in advance. That's basically not looking at all. And so that becomes then the issue. Well, if the triune God does exist, then prophecies are possible and what about this particular case?

Well, there's two things to be argued for the fact that Jesus, in fact, did say this before the destruction of Jerusalem. The first one is that there's not as much detail as you'd put on if you were writing it after the fact and you wanted to make Jesus look good.

You would have thrown in extra details to make it look like he was really just nailing it. And the second thing is, and this is the bigger problem, I subscribe to a minority view amongst biblical scholars that with maybe the exception of the book of Revelation that everything in the New Testament was written before the year 70.

[10 : 26] Because one of the great mysteries of the New Testament is that there's no reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. Like, it's not talked about. Like, in the destruction of the temple, it brought the end of the Jewish sacrificial system.

It brought the scattering of the Jewish people. It brought the destruction of the Jewish nation. It brought, and these are all obvious talking points for the early Christians for whom dealing with their Jewish friends and neighbors was one of the biggest things that they had to deal with.

It was an obvious talking point. Like, you can no longer go and have a sacrifice to deal with your sins. And didn't, you know, that's just all gone. And yet there's no reference to it whatsoever in the entire New Testament.

Which is why a minority, but a significant minority of scholars believe that everything in the New Testament with maybe the exception of the book of Revelation was written before the year 70.

The absence of the destruction of Jerusalem which transformed the Jewish people is a very telling piece of evidence. So I think it's valid for us to read this as a prophecy. Jesus says this.

[11 : 34] Forty years later, it happens. So, what happens? He just doesn't sort of stop there.

Something deeply human in the disciples provokes a longer teaching time by Jesus. Here's what I mean. Look at verses three and following.

And as Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, tell us what are about to be accomplished.

Now, as I said in my introduction, we're obsessed with thinking that we know the future. In fact, we look down our noses at people who don't look at the January 6th events as being a sign and a precursor of terrible things.

Who don't, who others who see the border crisis in the United States as a sign of terrible things. Who see the hate speech stuff that's going on in the Canadian government as being a sign of a terrible future.

[12 : 43] Like, we are obsessed with trying to think to figure out what the future is and we look down our noses. Somebody who doesn't share our particular political perspective that will look and how can you not see that as a sign is how we talk to each.

Like, we might not use that word but that's how we think. How can you not see that as a sign? Like, we're always looking for signs and we always think that we can know the future that we have some insight and we think that people who don't share our insight about where the culture is going are naive.

They're foolish. They're, you know, whatever. Brainwash by who and pick your bad guy. So what we see here is the normal human thing.

A normal human thing. I got Jesus here. I'm going to, he's going to tell me when this is going to happen and he's going to tell me the signs of when it's going to happen. Now you have to realize that this desire for this inside knowledge, this takes place on either the Wednesday or the Thursday.

Probably the Wednesday. And on Friday, Jesus is hanging on the cross dying. They're asking him this question on Wednesday.

[14 : 01] and less than approximately 48 hours later, he's dying on the cross. And I can well imagine that afterwards they were going, good grief.

what were, what was, like what, like what just happened? Why were, I mean they think Jesus is going to go on, he's going to triumph and you know who knows what they thought. Maybe they thought that after he conquered the whole world he was going to knock down the temple, make a better one.

Like who knows what they were thinking. They're just caught up with their desire to know the signs better than other people, know the future better than other people and they're asking it from their perspective and they don't see that even though Jesus has told them time and time and time and time again that he's going to Jerusalem to die on the cross and that he'll rise from the dead, they don't see that's about to happen.

How does Jesus answer? Does he say to them, you're so stupid you're asking me this question when I'm about to die on the cross? Like what, he doesn't do that. He takes the question and in a sense what he's doing, you can see here that Jesus is speaking to our human desire to to know the future and to know signs.

And so he answers their question. So what does he say? Look at verses five and following. And Jesus began to say to them, see that no one leads you astray.

[15 : 39] Many will come in my name saying, I am he, and they will lead many astray. Now just sort of pause here for a second. this command and warning to not be led astray is going to be repeated in this text and it's a very important thing for us to understand.

I mean, it's something for us to make a part of our prayers. That Lord is, as we're trying to figure out, you know, things about climate change and things about politics and things about economics and things about this and that, help us to think about it Christianly and Father, help us to not be led astray.

And when it comes to teachings around the second coming of Christ, help us not to be led astray and help us not to be led astray by false teachers and false prophets and idols and lies.

Help us, Lord, not to be led astray. It's a very good thing for us to pray. Jesus is, in a sense, telling us, you should pray this because you should want to not be led astray. And it also must have, like, we don't get any of the, we don't get any of the disciples' reactions to this, but it must have puzzled them.

They're trying to think, okay, we're just asking about the stones being knocked down, but now you're talking about false Christ? Like, how can there be, we just know who you are, like, how could there be a false, like, we don't get their reaction to that.

[17 : 05] But, okay, maybe he's now going to tell them the signs and the time. Well, let's look, verses 7 and 8. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed.

This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places. There will be famines.

These are but the beginnings of the birth pains. Now, just sort of pause here for a second. every one of these things are exactly the sort of thing that we think of as being signs.

We see a war. We see famine. We see earthquakes. We think surely these must be the signs. And Jesus says these are not signs. This is just normal life.

This is just normal life. They're not signs. They're not signs. life. It's just life. So we go, okay, that's a bit puzzling.

[18 : 17] But then he continues. Look at verse 9. But be on your guard. That's sort of a very similar type of command as to not be led astray.

for they will deliver you over to councils and you will be beaten in synagogues and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake to bear witness before them.

And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say.

But say whatever is given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak will rise against parents and have their parents put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake.

But the one who endures to the end will be saved. Isn't Jesus great at sales? Like if that doesn't make you want to become a Christian, I don't know what would.

[19 : 33] Once again, none of these are signs. He's describing normal human life. And he's describing that people who, what he's describing is he's describing life after his death and resurrection, that there will be a Jesus movement, movement, and that this Jesus movement is going to face at times very, very, very bitter and deadly persecution.

We have it very mild here in Canada right now. Maybe it will get bad. We should pray that it doesn't. Those of you who work in the government, those of you who work in media should do what you can to turn our nation from really wanting to persecute Christians.

But we know that there are many countries in the world where this, you know, I haven't read all of the book, but there's this very profound book called Everything Sad is Untrue.

And it's written by a fellow whose mother in Iran became a Christian. In Iran. I think she was a doctor.

And because of the persecution against her, she had to flee the country and she lost everything and she took her two kids with her. I think it was two. And this is a bit of a memoir of the man now much older about what it was to be taken in as a refugee to have fled Iran and be taken in as a refugee in Oklahoma.

[21 : 11] And the culture shock. And it's a very, very powerful title. And in many ways it could be another title about the point of the second coming of Christ.

Is that part of the reason the second coming of Christ isn't kooky but is very, very profound and very, very necessary is that it tells you that for those who are in Christ, at the end of the end of the end of the end of the end, everything sad is untrue.

That every tear will be wiped away and every wound will be healed. and every abandonment will be met with reception and love and a forever family.

These are not signs. This is normal Christian life. But notice in the midst of this description of profound heartache and profound hard times.

Like, not only would it be hard for me to be dragged before a court and sentenced to death or dragged before a crowd and be sentenced to death and then killed because I'm a Christian and that would be hard.

[22 : 35] It would be even harder if I knew it was one of my kids who was responsible for it. That would be just so hard. Whether it was my brother or my wife who turned me in.

But the thing which is interesting, if you go back and you look at the text again, is in the midst of that very, very, very hard time, and we still haven't got to any signs yet, is that God is still active and sovereign.

The gospel is proclaimed to all the nations. When you speak before kings and governors, the Holy Spirit will actually speak through you. And that if you endure all of these things, the result of enduring all of these things is eternal life.

That that's the destiny of going through all of these things, that you will be saved, that you will have eternal life, that God is still sovereign, even in the midst of these very, very, very hard and difficult times.

So now we do get to some signs. And just before I start to read it, I'm going to say it, and then I'm going to come back to it. I have only, so I'm not trying to make any attempt to try to connect the abomination of desolation with the man of lawlessness or the beast or the antichrist.

[24 : 01] I'm not giving a talk on eschatology. It's fine to give a talk on eschatology, and obviously the Bible teaches an eschatology. I'm just trying to deal with the text in front of me. And so I have one particular piece of advice, is that if we listen to this, you don't want to be Eustace or Jill.

You want to be puddle glum. And those of you who know the Narnia Chronicles, that's the big takeaway that you should get from this. I want to be puddle glum, not Jill or Eustace.

So I'll explain it in a moment. Let's listen to these signs. Verse 14. But when you see the abomination of desolation, standing where he ought not to be, let the reader understand.

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house to take anything out. And let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.

And alas, for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days, pray that it may not happen in winter, for in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been seen, as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now and never will be.

[25 : 20] And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved, but for the sake of the elect whom he chose, he shortened the days.

And then if anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ, or look, there he is, do not believe, and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders to lead astray if possible the elect, but be on guard.

I have told you all these things beforehand. Now, there's a series of books by C.S. Lewis called The Narnia Chronicles, and I can't remember what book it is in the order.

The two human beings, it sort of talks about a separate world, a separate universe, where there's this Aslan who's like a Christ figure. And all of The Narnia Chronicles involve human beings from our sort of world or timeline going into this other world.

And in this one particular world, these two young people, I think they're both like 12 or something, Jill and Eustace, they get brought into this other world. And Aslan meets them, and Aslan gives them a task to fulfill.

[26 : 32] And in this task, he says, you will have four signs, and these four signs, you need to remember them every day. Every day, you need to say them over and over and over again. Don't forget them.

Be on the lookout for them. And then here's the main point. You need to understand that these signs might not be obvious, but you will come across them, and if you follow them, you'll succeed in this quest which he sent them on.

Four signs. And they're told to remember them over and over and over and over again. So the thing goes on, and what happens, of course, is that the two kids regularly forget what the signs are, never recognize the signs when they come.

The only one who actually remembers the signs and finally recognizes each signs is this creature, a marsh wiggler, called Puddleglum. And that's, I think, the recommendation we can have for this.

It's very interesting. In the commentaries, they go on and on and on and on about what the abomination of desolation means. Nobody knows. There's three vague references in Daniel.

[27 : 49] But we're told that it will be a sign of the end. And we're told that there will be a time of great tribulation. Whether that's all over the world or just in one particular area, we're not told.

One of the great problems with North Americans is that we think somehow or another, whenever the tribulation comes, it has to be in North America, as if we're somehow like the center of the universe. Duh!

We're not! Like, maybe it's describing right now what's going on in Iran. Like, maybe we're in the period of it right now because of Iran or China.

Like, why should we think it has to be connected to us? Like, maybe it's going on in parts of Africa. It just says there will be a time of great, great, great tribulation and there's this thing called the abomination of desolation and what we can, I think that C.S.

Lewis was very wise. We probably won't recognize it. That's why Jesus keeps saying, be on your guard, be on your guard, be on your guard. Because it could very well be something that people just go, you know, it's like, it's like, I'm starting to be a bit controversial, complaining about medically assisted dying.

[29 : 00] Oh, don't, it's just a small thing. Don't worry about it. Don't think about it. Or discussing certain other types of things about, you know, changing the gender of kids.

And they talk, you know, so we're going to start, don't worry about it, just a small, like, why are you getting all upset about it? It could very well be something that all of the elites, all of the hoity-toity pooh-paws who live in the best sections of the country and all make lots of money and are all very, very smart and they all have 10 PhDs or have are very, very powerful and they all think this is a wonderful thing, is pray that I will be puddle-glum and pray that you will be puddle-glum.

Remember the signs. Remember them. And by the way, before we go anything any way further, why on earth do we even think about this?

Why is it even being talked about and remembered? Well, the only reason that any of this is being talked about and remembered is that even though it was said on a Wednesday and on Friday he died on the cross, on Sunday the grave was empty and Jesus appeared alive.

And if on Sunday the grave was not empty, if in fact the body of Jesus was still there, we wouldn't read any of this stuff, we wouldn't know about it, nor would we care about it, nor would we think it's important.

[30 : 21] And if we met somebody who thought it was important with Jesus' body rotting in the grave just after he'd said these things, we'd say, you guys are deluded, like why do you pay any attention? The guy, nothing he said worked out or turned out.

It's only the significance of the resurrection of Jesus after his prophecies and in light of the whole history of the whole story of the Old Testament that we look at these things and say, the grave is empty.

He rose from the dead. He ascended to heaven. And he is the one. He didn't tell us that he's going to come again because he's studied the dialectics of history, that he's understood the dynamics of technology and science, that he's figured out an algorithm that will show the future.

These are things that our culture would like. His only authority is his own. It's the authority of having defeated death, of having risen from the dead.

And when he ascended into heaven, he said, I'm going to come back. I will return. And now we get to this other part.

[31 : 34] I have to watch my time. 24 to 27. And this is just mind-blowing. And what this is showing here, by the way, is showing something that, you see, when Jesus dies on the cross, on one hand, his first coming is to deal with a sacrifice for sin.

He is introduced in John's gospel as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And in all of the Old Testament sacrificial systems, there's always this double thing that goes on, where you have an animal that's innocent, and in a sense, by touching the animal or offering the animal up, the bad things in you, the shame in you, goes on the animal, and the innocence of the animal comes to you.

And the fundamental purpose of Christ's coming is that he is that, he is, as God's son, he is that Lamb of God that God has provided so that when we put our hands in the hands of Jesus, the things within us which are evil and bad go on him and his righteousness is given to us.

But there's something else as well, is that when he rises from the dead, it means that something new has entered our created order. The life of the world to come has come to enter our created lives to Christ, and we are born again.

That life of the age to come, that eternal life, enters ordinary human beings like you and me. And when we see these final words, we're seeing is the life of the age to come, coming to its final end and breaking apart the life, our life, the life of this age.

[33 : 21] Listen to it described. For in those days after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light and the stars will be falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

Jesus will come. Why do we believe that Jesus will come? It's because of the resurrection of Christ.

Why is it precious? It's precious because it shows us the true story of the world and a way for us to be in the true story of the world that makes it a great difference.

Here's what it is. Like if you read self-help books, if you read advice columns, if you sort of just, you know, pick up what the main lessons of Hollywood and the media, the lessons is that the full human life, the mature human life is, you know, win, win, win, win, win, and at the end, win in capital letters.

[34 : 36] But that story doesn't have any place with suffering or for failure. And in fact, actually, I think a case could be made that that doesn't even describe the real world.

Even if you took, if you mastered every one of those self-help books, and so your whole life was win, win, win, win, win, win, win. At some point in time, you die, and then you lose.

Who wants to be part of a story that involves win, win, win, win, lose? Lose everything. Show the first diagram, please.

You can see this as one of my profound works of art. This is describing the story of the Bible. And I'd say that because of Jesus and what he tells us, it's the true and greater story of the world.

And what it's describing is that this God creates all things. He creates things good. And then that's chapter one. Chapter two is the fall.

[35 : 46] It means that from within this created order, human beings who, in a sense, Adam and Eve are called to be, in a sense, the priests that represent the entire created order. And they representing the entire created order.

The only man and woman is made in the image of God. They rebel against God. They want to be their own God. And as a result, evil enters, evil and brokenness enters into the human world.

And then chapter three is what we now primarily know as the Old Testament, is that God makes promises and prepares to send a deliverer. And then chapter four is Jesus.

And Jesus is God keeping his promise. He sends the deliverer. And then chapter five is the already not yet. It's the time that we're living in. And then chapter six is the end of all things and the beginning of all things.

But if we, if you look at the next image, you'll see that there's a slightly different way that I want to write, show you it. You probably can't read it. Maybe you can. And I apologize.

[36 : 47] I don't know how to do things on the computer, as you can see. So I hand draw them. So here you have another way of looking at this story. You see at the bottom the good creation, the fall, the preparation.

Number four is Jesus. But then you see that with the resurrection of Jesus, this is how the New Testament describes it. And this is how you see it even in this description, verses 24 to 27.

That the life of the new creation, when Jesus rises from the dead, that's the life of the new creation entering into our created order.

And so we live in this pink area. Human beings live in this pink area. One way to describe it is the already not yet.

What that means is this. On one hand, I still am part of the old created order. I have a tendency to sin. I have a tendency to selfishness. I get sick. I suffer.

[37 : 47] I die. On the other hand, there's also in me, not because there's anything special about me, but purely and utterly because of Christ. When I put my faith and trust in Christ, I am born again.

And that means the life of Christ enters into me. That resurrection life enters into me. I have become God's child by adoption and grace.

It means that when I die, I don't really die. I just continue into this new heaven and the new earth. It means that I have gifts of the Holy Spirit that come from the Holy Spirit.

It means I have a new relationship with my Father that in some ways, some of this new creation already has little tiny glimpse and gleamings within even the lowliest of Christians.

But when he comes the second time, then this created order comes to an end. And there will be a judgment of the living and the dead. And the new creation continues on with the second coming into the new heaven and the new earth.

[38 : 52] So why is this so precious? You see, the Bible is very wise. It tells us that Jesus and Jesus, what's it like to be a Christian?

I win. I fail. I suffer. I win. I lose. I suffer. I fail. I lose. I win.

I suffer. At the end, win. And it means that in the midst of my failures and my sufferings, my sin, I know that I am the adopted child of the triune God, that he is still sovereign in this world, and that every day that I live, I am one day closer to seeing Jesus face to face.

And the end of the story of my life, well, one way to put it is win. Another way to put it is welcome. The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit say to George, welcome.

They say to the lowliest Christian, welcome. I am so glad you are here. That is the good news of the gospel.

[40 : 17] That changes how you take risks. It means you can take risks. Because the final word about you is welcome. I invite you to stand, please.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, the world can make it seem like it's kooky to believe that Jesus will return and that there will be an ending of this created order.

Father, some of us feel that kookiness, pressure very strongly. Others, just like water off a duck's back.

We ask for all of us, Lord, that you help us not to go overboard thinking and talking about this. But we ask, Father, most importantly for most of us that it become a precious thought to us to know that as your child, by adoption and grace, that every day we live, we are one day closer to seeing you, that we are one day closer to hearing your welcome, that you do, as my granddaughter says, you do beat everything.

And that when we are in Jesus, we share in his being of everything. And we give you thanks and praise for Jesus, that his death is for us, his resurrection is for us, and that because we are in him, your final word about us will be welcome.

[41 : 48] So, Father, please keep these truths precious and make them deep in our hearts. Help us to be unashamed of them, unembarrassed. Help us not to be led astray. Help us to be on our guard.

And we ask all these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.