

Grieving with hope

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[0 : 00] I want to speak then this morning about love and death and grief and how it is possible to grieve with real hope.

! We do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind who have no hope.

So somehow when those whom we love die and we grieve their loss, it is possible to grieve with a solid, confident hope.

And back in 2001, after the Twin Towers terrorist attack, Her Majesty the Queen wrote to the American people and said that grief is the price we pay for love.

When someone we love dies, the shock and the hurt, the confusion, the anger, the bitter sadness inside, the sense of being hollowed out and crushed and weak and empty and powerless, it's devastating.

[1 : 29] That's grief. Grief is our natural, can't escape from it reaction to the pain of loss.

And for sure lots of us today won't need a description of grief. Maybe not so long ago someone we've loved deeply has died. A parent, a partner, a friend, and we're raw.

Maybe a long time ago we lost someone very dear to us. And mention of death and grief and news of the Queen's death even may bring back and trigger strong reactions.

Grief may be very personal to us and private. Grief can also touch a nation and show itself publicly.

Grief can also touch a nation and say, And affects us and we don't quite know why.

Grief can be personal and private. Grief can be national and public. And all of us at some point living our lives in the shadow of death will cry bitter tears of grief.

[3 : 07] Some believe that in the face of death we're forced to grieve. We are forced to grieve with no hope.

Grief can be. And you lose someone close to you and you'll never see them again. You'll never hold them again. Because death is the absolute end.

Precious relationships are cut in two with no future. There is just darkness and no hope. Were we to live in a cold chance universe and if there is no good creator over us, then in the face of death we must say we are utterly hopeless.

There can be no reunion with those we love. Ever. Grieving hopelessly can crush you.

In our 21st century world, because that can feel too much to deal with, some will grieve with pretend hope. We make believe, we try to grasp at anything to feel better.

[4 : 18] You hear sports stars on telly sometimes, I know my dad's looking down on me and he's proud of me. Make believe hope slips into funerals too and talk of death and beyond gets smothered in sugary sentimentality.

A while ago a friend of mine's dad died and I went with my friend to the chapel of rest to see his dad's body before the funeral. And they'd dressed his father in his suit in his coffin and I remember looking round at his son, taking a last glance at his father and my eye was caught by some words on the wall just behind.

They're very well known words. Death is nothing at all. It does not count. I have only slipped away into the next room. Nothing has happened. Everything remains exactly as it was.

What is death but a negligible accident? All is well. And I looked at the words on the wall and I looked at my friend with his father and it is so untrue that, to pretend that all is well.

From this Bible passage this morning, listen to verse 13 again. Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind who have no hope.

[5 : 37] God says to us here, it is possible to grieve differently. We do not have to grieve like those who have no hope and we do not have to grieve with pretend hope.

And that is because, as our Queen knew so well, the God who made us and loved us has acted in human history to deal with and defeat death.

And he offers to every person today, through Jesus Christ, real, eternity-changing hope. Solid, life-beyond-death hope as we face our own death.

And through the tears, hope now as we grieve for the loss of those we love. Let's look at these few verses together. I'd like us to consider first this morning the solid ground of our hope, which is this, that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Jesus rose. I think people often imagine that Christianity and its talk of heaven or life beyond death really is just fairy tale beliefs.

[6 : 47] It's an imaginary crutch for people who can't cope with the bare facts of life. Far from it. Verse 14 says, we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

The Christian hope is founded on true events which took place in history. This verse here says, Jesus died and rose again, and we believe that.

that is, 2,000 years ago, the Son of God entered our world, and in public, before crowds of eyewitnesses and sceptics and mockers, he taught with stunning authority, he worked miracles of healing, he restored those who were dead to life.

Until, arrested and tried, he was crucified, publicly, in front of eyewitnesses, Jesus died. And then, three days later, stunningly, this same Jesus rose bodily from the tomb to new life.

In front of eyewitnesses, astonished eyewitnesses, publicly. That is, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is no fantasy, it's not science fiction, it's not make-believe, but a witnessed, recorded, certain past event that took place, a solid stake in the ground of human history.

[8 : 31] Death, 2,000 years ago, was defeated through Jesus, for he rose again. Fact. And verse 14 says that his in history death and resurrection connects with us today wonderfully.

We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

Paul talks here of those who have fallen asleep in him. at the end of verse 16 he talks about the dead in Christ.

The New Testament describes those who turn and follow Jesus as being in him. As a person puts their trust in Jesus, you become joined to him and united with him, and you are now in him.

you are in him such that when you are in Jesus Christ, if I can put it like this, what happens to him happens for you.

[9 : 47] That which the Lord Jesus Christ experienced, this having died, now risen Lord, you too will experience because you are in him and with him.

let me illustrate this, I hope this helps by talking about an aeroplane. Forgive me, I'm not trying to be childish, but say, imagine an aeroplane.

The aeroplane is Jesus Christ and when you put your faith in Jesus, Paul says you are in him. You place yourself inside the aeroplane and now that you're in Jesus, now that you're in the aeroplane, here's the obvious thing about flying, whatever happens to the plane happens to you.

Wherever the plane goes, you go in the plane, in Jesus. Your future, your safety, where you go, what will happen to you, is totally joined up with the aeroplane that you are in.

those who are in Christ, like a passenger in an aeroplane, we live in him and we fall asleep, we die in him.

[11 : 07] And so verse 14 says, we believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

Jesus died, fact, Jesus rose, fact, and so on the future day of resurrection, the day when Jesus comes to this world as Lord and Judge of all, God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

Every person who has died, having fallen asleep in him, God will bring me with Jesus. he will raise me from the dead because I am in him.

My life, my future, my safety, now and through my death and beyond death, all bound up with Jesus, the having died, now risen death defeater, because I die in him, I'm united with him, I will never ever be separated from him.

In verse 14 of 1 Thessalonians 4, this is the solid ground of hope. Jesus Christ rose. And let me say this morning that in the midst of grief, it is so comforting to know that there is solid ground to stand on.

[12:44] And when death comes unexpectedly, or expectedly, you can almost drown with numbness and pain and anger, stress, even deep doubt.

When someone you love dies, your world can collapse, you're desperate, you find yourself desperately trying to hold on to reality. Maybe I half held on to some religious faith at some point, but now, as I stand before the coffin, the cold reality hits me.

Where do you turn then? Where do you find any real hope? What do you hold on to when your life is dissolving and someone you know is dying?

You may hold on to the solid and certain work of Jesus Christ that has taken place. In history, he died. In history, he rose and he will come again.

And the death of someone you love does not change that. The gospel message about Jesus Christ is true. It is a rock-solid foundation to build your life on and go to your death with.

[14:06] And God says, and so we can believe, that God will bring with Jesus those who, like Her Majesty the Queen, have fallen asleep in him.

first thing to say this morning. Come on now secondly to verses 15 to 17. In these last few verses of this passage, the Apostle Paul maps out for us how it will be when Jesus comes as Lord and Judge of all.

First this morning, the solid ground of our hope, Jesus rose and so will all who are in him. Now secondly, the certain future of our hope.

Jesus will return. And for those who are grieving the loss of one they love, there is wonderful comfort in these words. Listen. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who fall asleep.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

[15:30] After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will be with the Lord forever.

Here's what will happen in the future. First, the return of Jesus. Verse 16, the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God.

The living, risen Lord Jesus Christ, who rules our world today at the right hand of the Father, he will one day in the future come down from heaven, personally and physically.

He'll come loudly and unmissably. He'll speak with a loud cry of command, a great trumpet will sound, you won't miss it, his certain future public return.

Second, on that great day, the resurrection of the dead. You know what it's like when you're sleeping deeply and it takes a loud voice in your ear to rouse you at 7am or 10am or whenever it is.

[16:45] By the way, in this passage, Paul speaks about people falling asleep.

Falling asleep isn't a soppy way to talk about death. The thing about falling asleep is that you wake again or you're woken. On the day Jesus returns, the trumpet will sound, the Son of God will command, awake, get up, and the dead in Christ, verse 16, will rise because we're in him and we belong to him and we're with him.

Hearing the voice of the one who we waited for, we will rise. Our future here, notice, is resurrection. resurrection, not wispy, floaty spirit life.

No, for as Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead, so shall we. The dead in Christ will rise.

Somehow, by God's power, our bodies reconstituted from the dust and raised, body and soul reunited and will be made new.

Those who have died in Christ, says one writer, will be solid men and women who cast shadows in the sunlight and make a noise when we tramp the floors.

[18:21] The return of Jesus, the resurrection of the dead, and now lastly, see where this all heads. Third, the reunion of all in Christ with him.

Verse 17, after that, we who are still alive and are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

This verse speaks of a double reunion. Firstly, every living person who has put their faith in Jesus Christ, brothers and sisters, family members, reunited with each other.

we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with those who have died. Can you imagine that? Think of an airport and the arrivals lounge.

And think of a mass of humanity swirling around at an airport and the reunions which take place as loved ones come through the gates. Have you ever done that? Been part of that? Suitcases dropped and people sprinting up to each other and hugging and holding each other for the joy of it. [19 : 33] It's so wonderful to see you. That is how it will be. This is why it's possible to grieve with hope.

Seems to me we will recognise each other personally on that day. Your closest love, the brother or sister in Jesus whom you've seen cremated, the one whose loss you grieve, you will meet them again.

But the crowning glory of that day is this, that together we'll be reunited with the Lord. After that we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we will be with the Lord forever.

forever. We who are brothers and sisters in him, the millions upon millions of people who turn to Jesus Christ and are united to him, those who have fallen asleep in him, we who have waited for him through thick and thin, we will be with him, not ultimately in the air, but together with our Lord Jesus on a new restored earth where death is no more.

we will be with the Lord forever. I've wanted to just talk about love and death and grief this morning because our queen has died and we're a nation in mourning and you will watch it on TV over this coming week and you may watch the funeral.

[21 : 15] Death will be large in our minds and all of us at some point will cry bitter tears of grief as King Charles has done. And the Christian message is that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ it is possible for us to live and grieve with hope.

Two things to do this morning. One we must make sure that we are in Christ. Outside of Jesus apart from Jesus there is no hope in death and no hope beyond death but the Lord Jesus came and died for sins our sins and rose from the dead in history and he did that so that today everyone who turns to him and believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Like our late queen come to Jesus Christ and put your faith in him Jesus you are my risen! Lord and saviour I follow you. Pray for your family friends pray for those whom you love to turn to Jesus Christ because this sure and certain hope is for those is for all who are in him make sure today you are in Christ and then secondly verse 18 encourage one another with these words and there is no sidestepping the reality of grief you know can't escape it and we're to mourn together with those who mourn and yet through this period of national mourning these ten days and in this present world of death and grief as we experience loss and as our own deaths approach let us speak truth to one another and encourage one another with these words and so grieve with hope for when one whom we love dies grief will come and tears will flow shock and disbelief and anger and hurt and desolation and sorrow that lasts and hurts because there is no short circuit through grief but as you grieve allow the truth and the hope of

Jesus Christ to soften your tears and sweeten them for this one who has died if they fallen asleep in Christ well on resurrection morning when our Lord Jesus Christ comes they will awake and rise and so will you and they and you will meet and you'll greet one another in delight and together you will say we made it and God has done it and on that day we and Queen Elizabeth the second and all who are in Christ we will see and know and be with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who died and rose for us and on that day God himself will wipe every tear from our eyes and there will be no more death forever so place your faith in Christ urge all you love to place their faith in

Christ and as those who belong to Christ die grieve yes but we grieve with hope for eternity and let me lead us in a prayer let's pray we believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him our Lord as we have prayed already this morning we thank you for the lively faith of our queen thank you that she having died is safe with her Lord Jesus Christ thank you that on the final day you will bring with Jesus her and all who have fallen asleep in him thank you for the solid ground of gospel hope thank you for a certain future for all who turn to

[26 : 03] Jesus Christ father make us those in this veil of tears who cling tightly to our Lord Jesus may there be many this coming week who hear prayers said and words spoken and may they themselves turn to Jesus Christ as Lord and make us those as we wait make us those father who grieve with hope as we look forward to the day when we will be together with our Lord Jesus forever

we ask in Jesus name amen who