

Pilgrims in the Pilgrim: Redeeming Our Greatest Grievances

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 May 2014

Preacher: Dr. Ross Hastings

[0 : 00] Welcome tonight. It's such a joy to share God's Word with you. I thought the worship songs tonight were particularly appropriate, and in the spirit, there was a reference to our anchor.

And this psalm is in many ways, but an anchor for me, and I want to commend it to you as an anchor. There was another line on the hymn, one of the songs that we sang, that reflected the reality or the desire that we would still be singing songs when the evening comes.

And this is a psalm of pilgrimage, and it's my prayer that through reading and coming to understand this psalm a little, that you may be encouraged to keep singing the song of the Lord even until the evening of your life.

It is a song of pilgrimage. Also good to hear about pastors from Malawi. I always smile when I hear the name Malawi. I grew up in the country next to it, which was Zimbabwe. And the name of the president of that country for many years was Hastings Banda.

And my name being Hastings, of course, I got nicknamed Banda at high school. And my brother and I, to this day, when we email each other, we don't say, Hi, Ross, or Hi, John. We say, Hi, Banda. So great memories and great to hear that some pastors are coming here from that country.

[1 : 13] I encourage you to keep the Word of God open before you as we look at this great psalm. Eugene Peterson said about the psalms, that they are the set place where we habitually go over the ground and vocabulary and rhythms of prayer, immersing ourselves in the centuries-layered praying community, becoming companions with these friends who prayed and to pray.

So we enter into companionship tonight with those who have prayed for centuries and who continue to pray. When Aaron asked me to speak on this psalm, he had no idea that this was the psalm that ministered to me most profoundly when I lost my wife, Sharon, five and a half years ago.

My present wife, Tammy, who is sitting halfway back there, also lost her husband five weeks before I lost my wife in the same palliative care unit. And what I want to do tonight is to express the comfort of the Lord to us personally and to seek to expound this lovely psalm with you, but in the hope that whatever hard time you're going through right now, the Lord may apply his comfort to your heart.

We all experience grief because in this era of human history in which the kingdom has come but has not yet fully come, we have many trials and many losses.

Paul says the last enemy to be destroyed is death and it's still with us. Even though the death blow to death has been dealt by Christ in his death and resurrection, it's still with us until that final day of his coming.

[2 : 53] And there's still so much mystery. My talk will not seek to remove all mystery from death and loss and grief. It is very mysterious. Indeed, there's so much mystery.

Mystery has to be, for example, the exact timing of death. My wife was 21 days in palliative care and many nights I was told not to leave this night because she was going to pass away and she didn't.

And then the night when she did pass away, I wasn't there. And it's been a great sense of grief to me that I wasn't there. Mystery, even the best experts can't predict the timing of death.

And there's also the mystery of grief itself and what happens to you when you grieve. Believe it or not, Mark Twain has been a great source of insight on grief to me. He wrote this.

He says that it is one of the mysteries of our nature that a man all unprepared can receive a thunder stroke like that and live. There is but one reasonable explanation of it.

[3 : 49] The intellect is stunned by the shock and by groping gathers the meaning of the words. The power to realize their full import is mercifully wanting. The mind has a dumb sense of vast loss.

That is all. It will take mind and memory months and possibly years to gather the details and thus learn and know the whole extent of the loss. This is one insight into the mystery of grief.

That it is shock that slowly thaws out. And today, five and a half years later, I would say I'm still thawing out. And I know that Tammy's experience is similar. So there's much mystery.

We're blessed, if you like, with defense mechanisms that shock, if you like, is a gift. It's God's anesthesia to us.

It protects us from the reality until we can take it in. At the same time, there's a point in our healing when we need to feel those feelings and get them out. And there's a mystery, too, in terms of why are some healed and some not.

[4 : 50] I was a pastor for many years, prayed for many people to be healed. Some are healed and some are not. And my wife, despite the great prayers of the church that I was pastoring in at the time, was not healed.

And so there's mystery. The kingdom has come. The kingdom has not yet fully come. And so there's much mystery even in this time until the new creation when life will break in and there will be no grieving and loss.

The psalmist seems to know that all anticipated losses involve fear and all realized losses involve grief.

Wherever we experience loss, we experience grief. So it's not just the loss of loved ones and death that brings grief. It's a whole raft of things that bring grief to us and make the psalm very relevant.

The loss of a spouse is a great loss, particularly because you are so deeply intertwined with that person. And we are interpersonal selves, if you like.

[5 : 52] We are deeply entwined in one another in general. And when we become married to a person, we are deeply intertwined with them in a way that makes the loss very much the loss of part of ourselves.

But there are all kinds of losses. Even more acute is the experience of the loss of a child. Jeffrey Gore calls this the most distressing and long-lasting of all griefs. Then there are all sorts of losses and grieving around divorce.

Mel Kranstler writes that divorce is indeed a death, a death of a relationship. And just as the death of someone close to us brings on a period of mourning during which we come to terms with our loss, so too marital breakup is followed by a similar period of mourning.

And all sorts of losses may accompany a divorce, each of which brings grief too. This may include the loss of a home, a job, a financial status, friends, and so on. The amount of grief present in contemporary society, if you multiply the numbers of spouses and on average two children that undergo its losses and grief, is also phenomenal.

When undiagnosed, it can result in all kinds of personal and social ills. There are also breakups that we experience when we're teenagers, breakups of dating relationships that also evoke grief.

[7 : 06] And singleness also has its own grief. And there's lots of grief also when marriages are not as healthy as they could be. When pastors leave congregations, there can be a profound sense of loss for both the pastor and the congregation.

In all of these ways, we experience loss, and therefore we experience grief. Now last week, Jordan ably introduced our series, which is on Psalms, the Psalms as prayers that center on the goodness of God and point to Jesus.

If Psalm 1 was generally about the good life of the good person who focuses their life on the Word of God, Psalm 16 is specifically about the goodness of God in stressful times.

When facing death in particular. It is about the goodness when things, the goodness of God when things are not so good for us. This Psalm is thought to have been written by David as he faced the threat of death.

It is a Psalm for safekeeping in the midst of death. And I want to share some of my own story of loss in the midst of the big story that's in this Psalm, of the revelation of God to us, about death.

[8 : 14] Particularly as that centered in the story of the one man for all humanity, the Pilgrim, capital P, whose life and death and resurrection is predicted and fulfilled through this Psalm.

If Psalm 1 was perfectly fulfilled in Jesus, as indeed all Psalms, I think are in some sense filled full in him. If Psalm 1 was fulfilled in Jesus as the one who personifies the Word of God, then Psalm 16 is perfectly fulfilled in Jesus in a very specific way, a way that's confirmed by two New Testament quotations that tell us precisely that this was referring to the Messiah.

A comment of both Psalms is the fact that the writer, the Psalmist demonstrates a singular devotion of heart to God. The Psalmist in Psalm 1 and the Psalmist in Psalm 16 have this in common. They have a heart that's totally devoted to God. In Psalm 1, the sole devotion to God is expressed in the fact that he meditates on the scriptures day and night. In Psalm 16, it is expressed by the affections.

The total devotion to God is expressed by a defiant centeredness on God, even in the worst calamity. The metaphor for the godly person who lives the good life in Psalm 1 is a tree.

[9 : 40] The metaphor in Psalm 16 is a pilgrim or pilgrimage, especially as death is faced. The Psalm, if you look at it closely, is divided into two parts.

Verses 1 to 6 express the loyalty or defiant devotion of the pilgrim, whereas verses 7 to 11 relay the blessings that come to meet the pilgrim as a consequence of that loyalty.

We asked the question last week, who is the blessed person in Psalm 1? and concluded that the only person who could fulfill it was Jesus. As those in Christ, we can also pursue the devotion and thus the blessings of shalom or human flourishing that Psalm 1 speaks of that was so ably expounded by Jordan last week.

Now tonight, we ask, who is the pilgrim in this pilgrim Psalm 16? I want to suggest to you, it is Christ first, but then it is us.

Because we are one with Christ and we are in Christ. And as we practice communion with Christ, the reality of this pilgrim Psalm becomes ours, but only as those who are in Christ.

[10 : 47] Who is this person who can boldly say that God and His people, these are the number one thing in my life? Who is it that could possibly say, God alone actually satisfies all my soul and I never run to other gods?

Who is it that could possibly say, God alone is my experienced portion in my cup and I have a life of intimacy with God in this life and He gives me a beautiful inheritance and when death comes, I'm assured of resurrection and eternal life and the presence of God at His right hand forever.

Who can say those things? Only Jesus, really, can say those things. Hebrews, in fact, expresses the pilgrim motif of the life of Jesus in chapter 12 when it says, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

So Jesus is the pilgrim of this psalm. But I want to suggest to you that this psalm is also about us because we are one with Christ. It was about David first who experienced it to some degree and I would say he did so in light of the retrospective grace of Christ.

But we too can enter the psalm and know it to be for us. Why? Because we are one with Christ, the perfect pilgrim, and we journey with Him and are united to Him.

[12 : 18] We are ensconced in Him. If you like, as one theologian says, and I apologize, the only Latin terms I'll use tonight, I promise. The Ordo Historia has become the Ordo Salutis.

The Ordo Historia of Christ has become the Ordo Salutis of the Christian. Let me explain. The order of the history of Christ, what happened in Christ's life, in His life, death, and resurrection, has become true for us.

It has become our salvation order. And we enter into that, that pilgrimage of Christ. And that's why we can experience it. Jesus said, because I live, you too also shall live.

And so we tonight, as the people of God, are ensconced in Christ. We are one with Christ. And we are able to enter into both the blessings and the devotion of this psalm. The devotion of this psalm and the blessings that follow can be ours because we are Christ.

And I want you to mark this. The blessings of this psalm are contingent upon the devotion of this psalm. There are things to be learned in the midst of trial and stress and loss.

[13 : 23] But the writer of Hebrews says that they only become productive for us as we are exercised by them, as we're trained by them. And so both the devotion, the devotion is necessary for to experience the blessings, but we experience both the devotion and the blessings as people in Christ.

So this is how I want to come at this psalm and make, rather than taking the text strictly in order, I want to present this theme as the focus.

It is that God is good even when we face the worst of circumstances. But that our experience of the goodness or the redemption that He brings is contingent upon our single-minded devotion to Him. God is in the business of redeeming difficult things in our life as described in the last five verses. But this is contingent upon our single-minded devotion to God and pilgrimage described in the first six verses.

But this is the grace of it all. Both our devotion, even our response to God is enabled by God and by Christ as well as the rewards that we receive.

[14 : 33] We receive because we are in Christ. In sharing a few perspectives on death, I want to use the words of Richard of John Newhouse.

He says, I want to propose in his great book on grief which is called *The Eternal Pity* which I recommend to you. He said, I want to propose rather than impose some reflections and counsel on the experience of death and grief.

Mystery is attended by a fitting reticence. I was married for 27 years to a Scottish girl. I asked her to marry me after only four days of dating her and she was foolish enough to say yes.

The fact that I asked her after four days was a measure of how special she was. She was an intensive care nurse, worked in the Glasgow Royal.

She was a committed Christian who loved to serve God as a nurse and in the church and especially the poor and she did this without ceremony. She was a caring, wonderful mom to our two children. She loved to have fun and sometimes did some very outrageous things but she was diagnosed with cancer in December 2006 and she died in September 23rd, 2008.

[15 : 45] I was in shock even though she'd been in palliative care for three weeks and I will never forget driving home and watching people do ordinary things that living people do and wanting to scream, don't you know my wife died today?

The lament that life goes on when our loved ones die as if nothing ever happened is expressed well by Dietrich von Hildebrand who said, I'm filled with disgust and emptiness over the rhythm of everyday life that goes relentlessly on as though nothing had changed as though I had not lost my precious beloved.

C.S. Lewis in his book *Grief Observed* which was a huge help to me he said, you know, you should probably be grieving people and he talks about the loss of his own wife he suggested that all grieving people should be locked up for a year.

He says, because it's awkward for the griever and it's awkward for those in their presence because they break down at the most unlikely time. One of the myths I have unveiled is that you ever get over this.

You don't. It may become less acute but you have a limp for life. It marks you for life.

[16 : 55] The only question is how it marks you. By grace I can testify that God has brought redemption in the now and he has brought his hope of the glorious future resurrection day which lives strongly in my soul.

I don't wish to magnify my own effort in this journey. There is effort but it has been engrafted effort. I've been carried along as I've clung.

Sometimes that's all you can do is cling to the God who is the God of all comfort. Dallas Willard says, grace is not opposed to effort but to earning.

There's effort in seeking to move along with God in the midst of these times but I have found that it is an effort that is engrafted and empowered by the living Christ. There are just seven things I want to share that all start with the words grieving is redemptive.

Grieving is redemptive and they're all followed by an if. I have found grieving to be redemptive first of all if I am realistic and you will find grieving to be redemptive if you are realistic.

[18 : 00] That is, if our emotions are owned and our expectations for recovery are realistic.

Number one, if our emotions are owned. I want you to notice the emotional honesty in this psalm.

Keep me safe, oh my God, implies he feels unsafe and he's not willing, he's not afraid to admit it as he faces death. Verse one again, for in you I take refuge implies a fear for which he acknowledges he feels the need of refuge.

And then I want you to notice something else that these negative emotions are answered by positive ones in the last section of the psalm. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices. My body also will rest secure because he's delivered from death and he has the hope of resurrection.

You fill me with joy in your presence with eternal pleasures at your right hand. Notice the emotional intelligence here. Some of us have great IQ but not great EQ or EI, whatever it is.

And one of the things I discover about the psalmist is they are open with their affections, open with their emotions. We cannot really be healed in the presence of God in prayer unless we're open.

[19 : 13] Spirituality, folks, is not the denying of emotions but the owning of emotions in the presence of God. Stoicism is not the same as Christianity.

And grief is a complex emotional response to loss and it needs to be owned. C.S. Lewis says bereavement is a universal and integral part of the experience of love.

We will all experience it. But here's the thing. We need to own it. There's an old Turkish proverb that goes like this. He who conceals his grief finds no remedy for it. Grief has a certain power.

It will not be denied. It cannot be dismissed. It demands attention. And we'll get it one way or another. So, grieving is redemptive if we are realistic.

That is, if our emotions are owned. And secondly, if our expectations for recovery are realistic. Grief takes time. There's a lot I just don't know about the grief reaction.

[20 : 21] And we have to be so careful with regard to how we handle people in grief. One of the tendencies of Christian people when they encounter grief in others is to want to bring a quick fix solution.

The words of Richard John Newhouse are very appropriate. He says that for those sitting on the morning bench of the eternal pity, however, the triumphant note will ring hollow. There is a time in the process of grief for pronouncing theological reality.

It's often not in the beginning stages of grief. I'll never forget, it'll be about three months after I lost my wife and I was in my home church and a man came out to me who was very sincere, very honest. He asked me how I was doing. I told him, I'm on a journey.

I'm in healing. And he said, well, you'll see her again in heaven, won't you? And that was meant to be my answer for my grieving. I'll see her again in heaven.

And it did, I have to say, ring hollow in my heart when I heard those words. Now, there does come a time when the theological approach is necessary.

[21 : 28] There comes a time when theology does need to be heard. but we need to respect the process of grief and not be afraid of lament. So often in the church as well and even in funerals, we run quickly to the celebration of life and are afraid to enter into the grief and the reality of that grief.

And we need to allow grief to be grief and encounter the presence of God. And of course, then there does come a time for theology so here, point number two.

First of all, grieving is redemptive if we are realistic and own our emotions and the recovery process is respected.

Secondly, grief is redemptive if in it we embrace the mystery of the God of creation. The psalmist says, keep me safe, oh my God, for in you I take refuge.

I say to the Lord, you're my Lord, apart from you I have no good thing. I want to focus first of all on this word God. We will experience the redemption of God in grief if we run to the God who this psalm begins with.

[22 : 47] And he's the God who is the God of creation. It's the word L here. It's the God who is over all of creation, who has allowed sin, who allowed there to be agents of choice in his universe, who allowed evil and suffering to enter.

He was never its efficient cause, but he permitted it and his lordship over all is such as that he will out of that evil and suffering bring healing and bring glory to his own name.

More glory than perhaps would ever have happened if sin had never entered the universe. I don't believe for a moment that God created humankind and sort of wrung his hands wondering if they would fall.

God knew there'd be a fall and God knew already that he would redeem that fall and the wounds of Christ his son would enter in to provide redemption for a world.

And so I say first of all as we cling to the God who's the God of creation who's working all things after the counsel of his will who will bring more glory to himself by the revelation of his grace and Christ in a world in which evil is permitted than in a world in which evil has never entered.

[24 : 05] And a God who in our personal experiences of loss and suffering is there and comforts us and transforms us. In other words I'm presenting here a theodicy of redemption.

We would not have known God's grace and redemptive character in Acts were it not for the presence of sin and creation and furthermore we know that the eternal destiny of the people of God in heaven come to earth will be an infinite improvement on what Eden ever was.

Richard Newhouse says in the great liturgy of the Easter vigil Christians call their fall a happy fault or in the Latin *I lied Felix Culpa* I don't know any Latin it just so happens there are two lovely Latin words in my sermon tonight or in the Latin *Felix Culpa* oh happy fault that gave us such a great redeemer had there been no fall had there been no brokenness had there been no losses we'd never have known the redeemer Christ and the God over all creation is the one I cling to in the midst of my losses thirdly grieving is redemptive if in it we receive the compassion of the God of covenant faithfulness notice the word he's not just God over all creation he's the Lord Yahweh the God of covenant relationship the God who anticipated and redeems evil and suffering by entering into it historically and climactically through the coming of his son who entered humanity and creation to heal it and who enters into our own personal story by his grace and by the spirit bring us healing as well having taken on flesh

Christ is obedient to the death of the cross as Yaroslav Pelikan commenting on the theology of Irenaeus he says to live a genuine human life means to live a life that is formed by the shape of death by going through death rather than around death Jesus transforms the shape of death into the shape of life this is what makes the coming of Christ literally a matter of life and death this is why the Christian way of thinking about life and death is centered in a sign of dereliction the God-man hanging on a cross is a reflection of the faithfulness of Yahweh to his covenant fourthly grief is redemptive if in it we realize the personal nature of God notice how personal the relationship of the psalmist is to God keep me safe my God for in you I take refuge I say to the Lord you are my Lord he's the God of personal relationship when you go through losses this is the time when your relationship becomes even more personal than it's ever been before personal in the sense that we know that God is personal with us there's an

I-thou relationship that happens in the first few verses of the psalm which reflects the possibility of our I-thou relationship with God notice that the psalmist in the midst of his trial does not run away from God but runs to God to this God who he can say is my God this shepherd who he can say is my shepherd I love the personal nature of God the personal nature of God teaches me by the way that we are also personal we're made in the image of God he is persons in relation as the triune God we are persons in relation who are by analogy we are an image of God and we are persons and God knows us personally and I've been so thankful for people in my life in the time of my grieving who came alongside and said personal things to me that were true because they knew me one of them was a psychiatrist who has been a great blessing to me throughout my life and my struggle with depression in life

[27 : 59] Judith McBride who said just these words now Ross in your grieving be gentle with yourself be gentle with yourself because I wanted to run on and get over it and be into the next phase of life and bury myself in work but she gave a personal word that was a word from God to me at that time there are various expressions of the personal nature of God in this text I'll just won't say too much about them for the sake of time recognizing the gift of his accessible presence to us verse 5 he is our cup and our portion that word cup is the idea that he's the he's a person we can personally appropriate realizing the inheritance that we already possess and yet await verse 6 the lines have fallen for me in pleasant places we have an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and never fading according to first Peter and this is the reality that we hold on to as we hold on to that personal God in the midst of our struggles then verses 7 to 8 he rests in the blessing of his present guidance in and through the storm

I will praise the Lord who counsels me even at night my heart instructs me he counsels me he doesn't coerce me and that's God's part my part is my heart which is literally the kidneys or the vital organs the seat of the inner life so you see the beauty of this personal relationship in which God the Lord Yahweh is counseling not coercing and our heart is responding to him as he speaks to us I will keep my eyes always on the Lord with him at my right hand I will not be shaken the essential point here is that the tragedy that David was going through did not mean he was out of God's will so often we think when bad things happen to us that we must be out of God's will but in fact in the midst of all this he's able to say you are at my right hand and therefore I will not be shaken we have this false understanding I think that things should go well with us always as Christian people but that's not the perspective of the psalmist rather in the midst of our challenges he would not be shaken

because he held on to the personal

God who is the God of love this idea that God is personal as I said a moment ago reflects on the fact that we too are personal one of the greatest insights I've had into what grief is is the perspectives of John Bowlby in his attachment theory who suggests that grief in light of attachment is separation anxiety and that it is a result of the fact that we are very communal persons that we are an interpersonal self that accounts for why the loss is so profound when we lose our loved ones is a piece of us has gone and with that comes shock and part of this also brings therefore a longing for home and a home that's no longer there if our loved one has died a home that we have to find in God

I've struggled with the concept of home most of my life because I've moved so much and my wife brought such a sense of ability and home to me when she left there was a loss of a sense of home and I had to turn to the one who is our home John 14:23 says my father will love them and we will come to them and make our home with them our home is ultimately in the inner life of the Trinity that's where we find our home and grief can be redemptive if we turn to that home and find our home in him fifthly grief is redemptive if in it we enter community there's a beautiful reflection of community in verse three I say of the godly who are in the land they are the noble ones in whom is all my delight my God is my refuge I believe if and only if we embrace the human community of comfort as the psalmist does it's interesting to compare verses two and three verse two says God is the sole delight of my life and then he says no the saints are the sole delight of my life and I say how do I put those two things together we put them together by understanding that the people of God are one with God and that when we are close to the people of God we are encountering God himself the people of God are not the broken cisterns the idols that are reflected in verse three no rather they are the people in whom we genuinely should find comfort friendships have been huge they were huge for my wife as she was dying they have been huge for me as I sought to recover and finding friendship again with a wife that God brought to me just two years ago has been a friendship says Henry now and is one of the greatest gifts a human being can receive it is a bond beyond common goals common interests or common histories it is a bond stronger than sexual union can create deeper than a shared fate can solidify and even more intimate than the bonds of marriage or community friendship is being with the other in joy and sorrow even when we cannot increase the joy or decrease the sorrow it is unity of souls that gives nobility and sincerity to love friendship makes all of life shine brightly blessed are those who lay down their lives for their friends [33 : 35] I want to tell you folks there's no such thing as an individualistic Christian it's an oxymoron we are built for community you were birthed into the church when you became a Christian faith was mediated to you when you came to Christ you belong to Christ and therefore you belong to his church and that's an amazing privilege and an amazing blessing when you go through difficult times grief is redemptive if in it we enter into community and lastly grief is redemptive if it quickens our hope if it leads us to anticipate the change the kingdom fully come will bring verses 9 to 11 express the psalmist confidence he was near death and the Lord rescued him but this section is quoted by Peter in Acts chapter 2 and Paul in Acts chapter 13 as a reference to resurrection and I want to tell you folks this is the ultimate hope this is our ultimate hope when we grieve is the resurrection and Jesus the pilgrim went into death for us and then rose again from the dead in glorious triumph and we too have died in him and we too shall be raised with him there's a lot

I don't know about the future eternal state you know N.T. Wright writes beautifully about this he says supposing someone came forward out of the fog to meet us he's talking about the resurrection of Christ Christ came out of the fog of death to meet us and we have hope because of the resurrected Christ and we too shall be raised because we are in him I don't know much about how God will do what he's going to do I mean how's God going to do this resurrection thing as a person science background I think about that a lot John Polkinghorne has written very lovely ways about this he says you know the soul is a little bit like an information bearing pattern of the body he's using a concept that came from Aristotle and Aquinas who believe that the soul is the form of the body so Polkinghorne basically says our DNA is stored up in heaven when we die in addition to that all the memories that we have comes we will see our loved ones first of all we'll see Christ that's the most important and then we'll see and we'll see our loved ones and they'll be who they are remember Moses and Elijah and the Mount of Transfiguration they were Moses and they were Elijah and they died a long time before that didn't they and in the resurrection you will be you and I will be me now all of that means I don't know we know one of the church fathers said we

would all be 30 in the resurrection I have no idea where he got that from but I like it I like it I'm looking forward to the resurrection for the Christian to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord we may disagree on what exactly that means but I'm going to take it at face value so when people die they go into some kind of an intermediate state described as being with the Lord one day when the trumpet sounds and

Christ returns there'll be a resurrection and we will be gathered up to be with our loved ones in the air and then we'll return to live in a new creation heaven will come to earth and live out the resurrection life in union with Christ in the home that is all of our homes the home that we have in our triune God one of the visions or dreams I think it was I'm not quite sure what it was of my wife shortly after she died that I had was of her worshipping in a prostrate way the lamb of God but I also had another dream that I was going home to heaven myself and she was there with white outstretched arms I was a bit puzzled because I thought surely Jesus would welcome me first but I was reminded that when my kids were little and I'd been away on a trip and I'd come back and drive the car the kids would be waiting to see their dad and Sharon wouldn't come first and kiss me she let the kids run to me and

I'd have my arms open wide to welcome them in a similar way it was as if it seemed to me that God had said to Sharon okay you can welcome him home and of course she's going to carry me into the home that we all long for the vision we will see of Christ to be transformed into his likeness and then to be with them forever comfort one another with these words this is the word of the Lord