

Amusement, Outrage, Striving After Wind

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[0 : 0 0] So, earlier this week, a friend of mine told me that she had been thinking a lot about death lately. She'd been doing a lot of thinking about death, and this was something that was new to her.

This was a sort of a new experience, because over the last few months, her thoughts had kept gravitating back towards the reality of her own death.

And not only her own death, but the death of her boyfriend, the death of her children, and she admitted that it was very, very hard for her, very uncomfortable, very painful for her to look death in the face, as she put it.

And her pain isn't unusual. If any one of us is being honest about death, that's the same pain that we feel.

We do our very best to pretend that we're not going to die. That's what our culture is all about. Our culture is set up in such a way, often unintentionally, but it's set up in such a way that we really don't have to confront the reality of death on a day-to-day basis.

[1 : 1 0] Not very often. Because we have good things, like the invention of antibiotics, vaccines, so we've extended our lives greatly. We've built and engineered our cars so that an accident will keep us safe and protect us from death.

We've quarantined our sick and our dying in hospitals and in nursing homes. And all of these are things that are helpful. We want to be able to care for the sick and the elderly. We want to be able to keep our children safe from accidents and from disease.

All of these are there for good reasons. But there's sort of an unfortunate outcome from all of that. And this unfortunate, maybe unexpected outcome is that it makes this pretense seem more real.

This pretense that we have that I'm not really going to die. Or at least I don't really want to think about that fact. And the people around me aren't going to die.

It makes us feel as though death really isn't coming. Or it's just almost a theoretical thing that's such a long way off that I don't really have to think about it. But it is real.

[2 : 1 4] And I think a number of us have really been confronted with that reality over the past few weeks. We've, in our church, I just keep hearing, I just keep hearing from people who have had a close friend or a family member who has recently died.

Our mortality is beyond dispute. And we're going to learn this as we begin reading Ecclesiastes chapter 6 this morning. Now, if you're using one of the Bibles that's available in the back corners here, then I'd love for you to turn with me.

It's on page 556 in those Bibles. Ecclesiastes chapter 6. And we're going to learn here that our mortality is beyond dispute. And so the man who wrote this book, a man who identifies himself as the preacher or the teacher, depending on your translation, he's going to show us how we can find the good life in a world that is enslaved to death.

How we can find the good life in a world that is enslaved to death. So Ecclesiastes chapter 6. And we're going to start in verses 10 through 12. Near the end of the chapter.

And what we're going to learn is going to continue on into chapter 7. But just verses 10 through 12 for starters. Here's what the preacher writes. Whatever has come to be has already been named.

[3 : 34] And it is known what man is. And that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he. The more words, the more vanity. And what is the advantage to man?

For who knows what is good for man? While he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow. For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?

So in verse 10, the preacher reminds us, first of all, whatever has come to be has already been named. And it is known what man is. Now, we're going to sort of explain what that means.

Because that might not be obvious at the very first what that exactly means. Really, this is two statements. Whatever has come to be has already been named. And then statement number two, it is known what man is.

And these two statements fit together. Let's talk about naming something, first of all. So when you give something a name, you're giving something an identity. That's the first thing you're doing.

[4 : 36] When you're naming something, you're giving it an identity. So for example, if you are a government official and you are going to name a warship, a newly commissioned warship, and you name it after a World War II general, what you're doing is you're placing that warship in sort of this lineage of military glory, of victory.

If you get your first car and you do what I did and you give it a name, the Angry Possum, what you're doing is you're identifying this car as a temperamental car that sometimes chooses to play dead when I try to start it.

Now think about, how did you get your own name? How did you get your name? For, I'm sure, maybe there's some exceptions here and there, but for the overwhelming majority of us, our name came from our parents.

It's your parents who gave you your name. Now why? Why do we give parents, why is it that the parents are the ones who name their children? It's because our parents are the ones with the authority to do it.

Our parents are the ones with authority to do it. So when you give someone or something a name, you're not only giving it an identity, first of all, but second of all, you're also exercising authority over it. So the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis, it records the first example of naming.

[5 : 58] The first man, Adam, one of the ways that he exercised his God-given authority over the world is by giving names.

So we see, Genesis chapter 2, we read this. Genesis 2, verses 19 through 20, we read, And then when God made from Adam's rib, a helper and a partner that did fit him, that did complement him perfectly, Adam gave her a name too.

He said, Now as for man himself, how did he get his name?

We read in Genesis chapter 1, exactly. God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness. And so what that tells us is if we have this question of who is the one with authority over human beings, who is the one who gives human beings their identity, it is God who ultimately has authority over human beings like you and me.

It is God who has already given us an identity, who already has set limits for us. So the preacher says in verse 10, It is known what man is, that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he.

[7 : 51] So it is God who has assigned an identity to all of creation, to everything in creation. It is God who has expressed his authority over everything in creation, and particularly over human beings.

And it is known what man is. He is not able to dispute with anyone stronger than he is. His limits are set. Human beings like you and me are limited in our knowledge, we are limited in our intelligence, and we're limited in our lifespan.

If we try to bring a case against God, if we try to say that we don't deserve these limits, that we should not be assigned these limits, God has done wrong to me.

What's happened in my life is an injustice on the part of God. What are we going to bring as evidence? What arguments are we going to raise?

The preacher says in verse 11, The more the words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man? In other words, if we want to rise above this world that we are currently in, this world in which we see human beings facing their limits, in which we see human beings subject to, at present, subject to death, if we want to assemble a case, bring it before a judge, present mountains of evidence, present arguments that God has done us wrong somehow, we're going to end up nowhere.

[9 : 31] In verse 12, we read why all of these arguments, why all of these words are futile, why they are worthless, why they bring no advantage to you and to me. Verse 12, For who knows what is good for man while he lives a few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow?

For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun? So in other words, you and I don't know what is best for us. We can't determine for ourselves what the good life is.

Why? Because life is too short. Life is too fleeting. Life is like a shadow that fades when the day is done. The final assessment of your life doesn't come until after you have died.

It doesn't come until you are dead. I mean, think about any funeral you have been to. There is sort of a final assessment of this person's life. Unfortunately, the person who would have benefited the most from that is the one in the coffin.

You don't know how your lifestyle, you don't know how all the choices that you make will ripple down, not only to the people immediately around you, but also to the generations that come after you.

[10 : 53] We don't know what is best for us. Now, if you've been listening to any politicians speaking lately, they might deny that. They seem to really know what's best for us, don't they?

We don't know what's best for our world. We don't know what effect our decisions may have. We don't often know the right way that we should live. The only one who knows is someone with complete knowledge, is the one who sees the whole span of history in a single glance, is the one who has authority over us, the one that assigns an identity to us, the one who has already named everything.

So, when you and I recognize our limits as human beings, when you and I are willing to see that, and in fact to look death in the face, we have to take care not to condemn our Creator.

Often many people are willing to be defiant against God, to shake their fists at God, to accuse Him of wrongdoing. But what do we know? Our mortality is beyond dispute.

We're not in a position to rage against God. Our mortality is beyond dispute. It is inescapable. It is inevitable. And what we learn here is that we are meant to look it in the face.

[12 : 16] We are meant not to avoid it, but to look it in the face. Because you and I need the broader perspective that it brings. So, the preacher writes in chapter 7, and beginning in verse 1, we read this.

A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting.

For this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

So, in verse 1, we have the preacher. He's reminding us of our need, of your need, of my need, for a more complete picture of our lives. And so, he says, a good name is better than precious ointment.

And I think what's going on here is, because that might seem kind of, okay, what does that have to do with the day of death and the day of birth, I think what's going on here is this, that he's referring to ointment, or literally to oil, that is used to anoint someone, such as a new king.

[13 : 28] So, this is something that the king would be given at his coronation, at his commissioning service. And it's good to receive this commissioning and this anointing as a king. That's a good thing.

But the king is better evaluated not on the quality of his coronation service and the speech that he gives there and all the things that are said about him there. A king is better evaluated on the good name that he has earned over the course of his reign.

He's better evaluated by the whole scope of all that he has done. An evaluation that can only come at the end. And so it is that the day of death is better than the day of birth.

Your life is best understood not from its beginning, but from its outcome. Which is a helpful reminder for us. Sometimes we look at our life and we think that I understand what God is doing in my life.

Or I look at my life and I think, or I mourn it, or I think that, you know, this, all that is going to happen has already happened. That these awful things have happened in my life and that's just the end of the story.

[14 : 35] It's just a tragedy. Your story isn't over yet. Your story isn't over yet. Better is the day of death than the day of birth. Think about it.

There are some famous men, famous women, who have written memoirs halfway through their lives. Is it better to read that or is it better to read a biography of somebody once the whole course of their life has passed?

It's better for the second. Because what happens after their memoirs are written, sometimes what happens after those memoirs are written, completely affect the way that we look at their lives.

We need the complete story to understand what the good life is. We only have part of the story. And we can only get part of the story. The complete story is only given when the story has finally ended.

So verse 2 reads, It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting. For this is the end of all mankind and the living will lay it to heart.

[15 : 40] So to know what the good life is, to understand what the good life is, not just on a cerebral level, not just on an intellectual level, but to feel it deep in our hearts for it to cut to the core of our beings, to influence the way we live, you and I need to go to fewer festivals and go to more funerals.

We need to go on fewer holidays and go to more hospitals. The houses of mourning, that's where we learn the outcome of our lives and our hearts take it in.

To be wise is to dwell on our mortality. There's nothing wrong with going and enjoying yourself. We've learned that over the course of Ecclesiastes. We even learned that last week.

But I think we tend to fill our lives with enjoyment. We tend to fill all of our days and all of our moments with enjoyment. And we're completely out of whack, completely out of balance, and we have missed something better.

I saw many of you experiencing something better this past Sunday as we were at Russ Lamb's service. And I didn't know Russ personally, but I'm glad I went. It was good. It was good for me to go because we read in verse 3 this, sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.

[17:02] So first of all, that sorrow over death, this is not something that's wrong. Sometimes I think we have this mindset like we as Christians, we shouldn't be sad about death. We shouldn't experience sorrow.

We shouldn't experience grief. Put on a happy face. Pretend everything is okay. It's not okay. It hurts. We need room to experience that sorrow, to experience that grief.

Our sorrow over death, our frustrated sense that this is not the way things are meant to be, it is good for our hearts. Because in this world, in this world that we have filled with superficial entertainment, that we filled with shallow activity, in this world of fast food entertainment, what a funeral is, is it's a bitter but nutritious meal for our souls.

And so verse 4 says this, that the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but that the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. If you're a wise person, if you're a person who's beginning to understand what the good life is and beginning to embrace it, then here's the reality.

You feel more at home at a funeral than you do at a comedy club. You feel more at home at a funeral than you do at a comedy club. That's where the heart of the wise is. The preacher is beginning to warn you.

[18:34] The preacher is beginning to warn me that we are in danger of being sucked into what might be, you know, what I'm just going to call the Squamish delusion, okay? We're in danger of filling our days with pleasure, with excitement, with enjoyment, with entertainment.

That's what we do in our town and we do it so that we can whitewash over the foundation of despair on which our town is built. We're going to bury that quiet desperation.

We're going to bury our mortality underneath another expensive development project. What the preacher is calling us to do is to embrace the good life.

And the preacher is reminding us that the good life is not gained by indulging in pleasure and scandal. The good life is not gained by indulging in pleasure and scandal. And I think this is important.

I want to stop for just a second because our, maybe our tendency is to think, well, that sounds like a joyless existence. This existence of dwelling on death, this existence of looking at funerals.

[19:39] I just want to enjoy myself. I don't want to, I don't want to be one of those miserable people whose lives are filled with darkness and gloom, right? All that we're doing is exposing that foundation of despair that exists in the life of people in our town already.

There is no hope beyond the grave. we're being honest. We're being open because your first step towards the good life is admitting the reality of the world.

And the good life is not gained by indulging in pleasure and scandal. We see that beginning in verse 5. It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools.

For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools. This also is vanity. So the song of fools. You know, all of this entertainment that we indulge ourselves in, this fun, good time that passes away after just a moment and leaves us no better than when we started.

The entertainment options that appear on our TVs, our computer monitors, our cell phone screens that appear in our downtown parks, there's nothing wrong with them per se. There's nothing wrong per se with having fun.

[20 : 58] We use them in the wrong way. We use them as a coping mechanism. We use them as an avoidance. We use them as a way to hide from our mortality by indulging in pleasure.

And a life that is saturated with trivial amusement is not the good life. It is not the good life. The sound of all this frivolous laughter is the sound of thorns crackling under a pot as they're consumed by the fire.

It all goes up in smoke. So it's better to receive the rebuke of the wise, which is, I guess, what we're doing right now. We're receiving the rebuke of the wise, you and I are.

We need wise people to speak to us, to remind us of our mortality because to be wise is to dwell in our mortality. The unfortunate truth is that many people aren't willing to look death in the face.

And unfortunately, there's a lot of foolish people not willing to look death in the face who are often put in positions of power, in positions where their lifestyle of self-indulgence leads them to oppress, to extort people, to take control of them, to take their money, to demand bribes, to demand gifts.

[22 : 17] This political corruption is very, very common. The King James Version really translates verse 7 well, I think. It says this, Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad, and a gift destroyeth the heart.

I wish I had a good English accent so I could do sort of a King James English thing there. But I like that. You know, this sort of oppression makes a wise man mad, that a gift destroys the heart.

A gift or a bribe especially destroys the heart. People with sense, people with wisdom, they see the oppression, they see the corruption in our world today, and naturally they're outraged.

They're outraged by this foolishness, by this foolish living. They're outraged by the pain and the suffering that it brings to the world. And the problem is that this outrage becomes a second coping mechanism.

Remember, the good life is not gained by indulging in pleasure, and also by indulging in scandal. We indulge in scandal when we indulge in outrage. Because this outrage can consume us.

[23 : 23] Just like pleasure seekers are consumed by self-indulgence, so it is possible to be consumed by outrage. Our culture contains a very unique blend of amusement and outrage.

When you take amusement and you take outrage and then they get married together and have a baby, we name it the internet. Right? I mean, seriously, just get on Facebook after this, scroll through your news feed, and here's what you're going to find.

You know, first, cute puppy photo. Oh, you know, it's really nice, right under that violent shooting. You know, you're just like, oh, oh, you're just horrified by that. Oh, baby pictures. Oh, that's sweet.

You know, it's like, oh, somebody raging about Donald Trump. Oh, okay. Vacation photos. Oh, I wish I were there. And, oh, cool video. You know, it's just like back and forth, back and forth, and if you're thinking, well, yeah, well, I'm a Facebook holdout.

I'm not going to do that. Well, yeah, but you're watching TV in the evening, right? And it's the exact same thing there, too. This whiplash between amusement and outrage, it's wonderfully distracting.

[24 : 24] It's a wonderful avoidance mechanism. Outrage works just as well as amusement at distracting us from our mortality, of helping us not to think about that.

but the good life is not gained by indulging in pleasure and scandal. The preacher warns us not to get sucked into outrage, not to get sucked into scandal, not to get sucked into, you know, into all those tense political arguments that you're having with your second cousin who's really weird, right?

He writes this in verse 8. Better is the end of a thing than its beginning and the patient in spirit than the proud in spirit. Be not quick in your spirit to become angry for anger lodges in the heart of fools.

Say not, why were the former days better than these? For it is not from wisdom that you ask this. So, you and I could, on the one hand, we could, you know, just indulge in this self-righteous indignation, you know, maybe it's some kid's mom because her kid wandered into a gorilla pen at the Cincinnati Zoo and the gorilla got shot.

Or maybe we could listen to verse 8. Wait for the end of the thing with a patient spirit. Wait until the complete picture is painted by all sides. And then when it is, persistently working to correct the wrongdoing.

[25 : 46] You and I could respond to a politician's rhetoric with just these immediate flames of judgment and indignation and fury. or maybe we could think carefully before responding, thinking how to respond in a wise and careful way since anger lodges in the heart of fools.

You and I could whine about how much better things were in the old days, you know, oh, back in that mythical golden age of my childhood when things were so wonderful. Or we could recognize, you know, that's just silly sentimental thought.

it's thought that purposely forgets all of the injustice, all of the evil that were present in those days. You can make America great again, but America wasn't always great back then for everybody.

Rather than responding in all this instant self-righteousness, all this instant outrage, the wise person recognizes that in a crooked world, the reality is there are no quick fixes. The problems that we face as individuals, as families, as a church, as a culture, they are complex.

The reality is we don't understand the world half as well as we think we do, no matter how nice our speeches are about it. We recognize that the road to justice, it requires patience, it requires persistence, it requires realism.

[27 : 20] Simple outrage, simple scandal does us no more good than amusement and pleasure seeking. I think our motive for indulging in it, according to the preacher, is we don't have to come face to face with what's really bugging us, with what's really eating away at us underneath.

The good life is not gained by indulging in pleasure and scandal. Instead, the good life is found in contemplating our God-given end. The good life is found in contemplating our God-given end.

To be wise is to dwell on our mortality, to not avoid looking at it, to not avoiding eye contact, but instead looking death in the face. If you and I look death in the face, if we come to grips with our mortality, then what happens is that we gain wisdom.

wisdom. And first of all, this wisdom actually is quite helpful for us in our life. It offers a measure of protection to us. And we see that because the preacher writes in verse 11, wisdom is good with an inheritance, an advantage to those who see the sun.

For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it. So, as you and I look death in the face, as you and I contemplate our God-given end, we find that what it does is it helps us, it gives us insight into our lives.

[28 : 46] It gives us insight into how we can make the best use of the time of the days that we have been given. It gives us insight into how to prioritize the way that we spend and save our money and the way that we can prioritize our relationships and the way that we can govern our lives carefully, and it protects us when life throws curveballs at us.

This wisdom contains a great deal of value for you and for me. Now, here's the thing, though. One thing that we've encountered as we've been reading the book of Ecclesiastes is that the preacher has been asking this question, where is, is there any lasting gain that I can get out of life?

Can I grab from life something and squeeze it until there is some sort of lasting gain and significance that I can carry on with me that makes it all worth it in the end? And as far as everything that's under the sun, so far he has concluded everything in the created world, he says, no, there is nothing in this created world that is going to give you that.

There is no lasting gain to be had. And that's what we have to keep in mind because maybe there's some people who would hear this and they would think, wow, okay, so basically if I start going to more funerals, what you're saying is I can get ahead in the world.

Oh, buddy, if you start going to more funerals, you're going to start realizing you're not going to get ahead in the world. There is no lasting gain to be had. Our mortality is beyond dispute.

[30 : 17] In case we're tempted to think that funerals are going to be some of this key to prosperity and to success, the preacher reminds us that when we go there, when we look death in the face, the wisdom that we are going to learn is going to teach us something and it's this in verse 13.

Consider the work of God. Who can make straight what he has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, in the day of adversity consider.

God has made the one as well as the other so that man may not find out anything that will be after him. So as we learn that our mortality is beyond dispute, as we dwell on it, as we gain wisdom from it, what we learn is that this wisdom itself has limits, right?

This wisdom itself that we have gained from it is not going to give us any sort of lasting gain. You're not going to get ahead in the world. You're not going to come out with any sort of lasting gain and lasting significance just by gaining this wisdom.

As we dwell on this, we learn how our mortality began. We learn how the first man, Adam, wanted to determine for himself what the good life is.

[31 : 40] We learn how God punished him for corrupting the world with this sin, with this rebellion against God, with this attempt to take over the judgment of what the good life is.

We learn that the crookedness that we see in this world, this death and decay that we see all around us, that we mourn, that we grieve over, it is in fact, verse 13, the work of God.

Our mortality is the work of God. It is what the authors of Scripture and what theologians refer to as the curse, with a capital C, the curse that he placed on Adam, the curse that he placed on all mankind when he said this in Genesis chapter 3 in response to this man's sin, he said, by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

There is no amount of wisdom that can undo this curse. There is no amount of wisdom that can help you and me to escape this curse. You and I, we cannot think, we cannot plan, we cannot engineer our way out of this.

We cannot make straight what God has made crooked. So in this world, his conclusion is in the day of prosperity be joyful.

[33 : 17] You know, enjoy the good days that we have. This looking death in the face doesn't mean you're a glum, morose sort of person who's, you know, all the time. This means that, you know, those days that you have that are enjoyable, the good things that God has given you, enjoy them, appreciate them, knowing that they are going to pass.

And in the days of ruin and the days of adversity, which will come, accept, accept, first of all, that there is a coming death, accept our mortal limits.

Recognize these limits have been imposed by God. We see that the confusing disorder of our world is God's way of humbling us, of exposing our little knowledge.

We see this all throughout Scripture. There was once a man named Job, a man who suffered as really just about as much as a human being possibly could.

You know, when I think of all of the people I know and I think of all the news stories I've read and then I compare them to the story of Job, I've realized there is really nobody I've ever heard of who has suffered more than Job.

[34 : 34] He lost all of his wealth and possessions. Just an incredibly rich, wealthy man with a large family, a happy life and just about all of it is wiped out all at once.

His children are actually all killed. They all die. His own body breaks out in disgusting, excruciating sores and when friends come to comfort him what ends up happening is they end up condemning him and saying you must have been a wicked man to deserve all of these things.

Think of how that feels when good friends of yours falsely accuse you of evil, of doing something wrong. Now imagine that you've endured all this suffering and now your friends are saying it's your fault that this is happening to you.

In the words of Job they're written in the Old Testament of the Bible in the book of Job and over the course of 37 chapters Job is arguing with his friends and really he's demanding an audience with God because he wants to present his case.

He wants to dispute his suffering. When God finally appears what happens is not that God stands it's not that God stands being judged and that Job is the accuser rather it is the other way around.

[35 : 53] It is God who questions Job. It is God who reminds Job of his limited perspective that he only sees a small fraction of the created world.

It is God who exposes Job's lack of understanding that he has not seen the whole story. In chapter 40 the Lord God says to Job shall a fault finder contend with the almighty?

He who argues with God let him answer it. And all Job can do is reply behold I am of small account what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth I have spoken once and I will not answer twice but I will proceed no further.

And the Lord continues his case presenting his superior wisdom his incredible power something Job cannot match. And in chapter 42 Job admits to the Lord I have uttered what I did not understand things too wonderful for me which I did not know.

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear but now my eye sees you therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes. What Job does is he repents he turns away from his defense from the case that he has built up against God and he admits I don't understand what God is doing in this world and I'm not capable of understanding.

[37 : 22] Job doesn't know what is best for himself. Job doesn't know what is best for you and for me. He doesn't know what the good life is. So he trusts that God knows.

He entrusts himself to the wisdom to the judgment of his Lord and he says now my eye sees you. Not now I've got all the answers that I was looking for.

What Job really needed was not all the answers. What Job needed was to experience the presence of God. Job didn't need the answers for why his life had been ruined by mortality and by death.

He needed to see God face to face. And the first step to seeing God face to face is that you have to look death in the face.

We can't experience the presence of God. We can't witness all that we can't understand all that God is doing understand who he is and understand how he is working in our lives and caring for us until we are open and honest about our situation.

[38 : 34] Consider carefully your end. James chapter 4 the apostle James has written this question for you and for me. He asks this what is your life?

For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Your life in this world is a mist that is dispelled easily by the morning sun.

Your life in this world is a shadow that disappears in the evening shade. But when you and I but when you and I can't bear to look death in the face when we are overwhelmed by it by the darkness of it when we have looked it in the face and now we can bear it no longer and turn our eyes away what we see is a man who has not only looked death in the face but a man who looked death in the face and death looked away.

The second Adam the one man who conquered death says these words in Revelation chapter 1. Fear not I am the first and the last and the living one.

I died and behold I am alive forevermore and I have the keys of death and Hades. This is Jesus Christ our Lord. Those of us who went to Russ Lamb's funeral last Sunday we were reminded that this is the Jesus Christ that Russ Lamb put his hope his faith his trust in.

[40 : 06] Russ was united with Jesus Christ and so we can have confidence that he is with Jesus in heaven and that when God makes all things new that Russ is going to be raised to a new life to live on this earth forever and ever in the presence of God.

No longer subject to death no longer constrained by death but forever experiencing the good life the eternal life with Jesus Christ our Lord. So you and I because those of us who have believed in Jesus Christ who are united with Christ who will be raised again with Jesus Christ you and I can live with hope we can live with confidence we can embrace the good life that God has given to us a good life that is never that is never going to be taken away from us.

And that lets us look death in the face and death will look away. We've been shown the way to this life and the way to that is a realism is an honesty about our situation.

The good life is not gained by indulging in pleasure and scandal. Here's what the good life is gained by. The good life is gained is found in contemplating our God-given end. That is the good life that you and I as believers will gain when we look death in the face and when we find that there is still hope and there is still joy in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our God and our Father this is heavy and this is hard. I'll admit as I look at this I see that it's hard to on the one hand confront the brutal reality of death to experience the sorrow and the grief of it to not try to hide and avoid it the way that our culture has been constructed and built to do by filling our lives with pleasure by filling our lives with outrage but rather Lord you've said that you want us to do that to confront that brutal reality and at the same time maintain a hope and maintain a confidence that Christ is risen from the dead and he has conquered the grave so that though we weep and though we mourn yet we know as Scripture says all those who sow weeping that they are going to still rejoice we thank you that though we shed tears of sorrow and of grief that they're mingled with tears of joy knowing that we have the good life and that there is more of it waiting for us beyond the grave

[43 : 02] Amen Amen