

# Final Destination

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Date: 18 December 2022

[ 0 : 00 ] Begin our worship this evening by singing to God's praise in Psalm 84, in the Scottish Psalter version, Psalm 84, the tunes Tramps and Hawkers.

We're going to sing from verse 1 to verse 6. How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord of hosts, to me the tabernacles of thy grace, how pleasant, Lord, they be.

My thirsty soul longs vehemently, yea, fainthly thy courts to see. My very heart and flesh cry out, O living God, for thee. We sing verse 1 to 6 to God's praise.

How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord of hosts, to me.

The tabernacles of thy grace, thy blessed Lord, they be.

[ 1 : 03 ] My thirsty soul longs vehemently, yea, fainthly thy courts to see.

My very heart and flesh cry out, O living God, for thee.

To behold the smile, O thy devout, and her tender rest.

The swallow also for herself, and purchase it amidst.

In thy long waters, where she say, her young ones forth may bring.

[ 2 : 07 ] O our almighty Lord of hosts, who art my God and King.

Blessed are they in thy house, and dwell, may ever give thee praise.

Blessed is the man who strength thou art, in whose heart are thy ways.

What Makes thy much peopleop In the Franks public. Nor be a heavenly book of Message in Caesar, be where she tells me. By thy poem's hearing.

Nor will thyUNT you falleth, that... Nor shall be Cummings. ... What Pharise driest, that... ... Or shall be conclusions, the Word of thee.

[ 3 : 15 ] Let's bow our heads together and come to God in prayer. Let us pray. Lord our God, our Father in heaven, as we come in worship of you, in adoration of you, we thank you that we come, lifting up our voices in praise to you and seeking that you will meet with us in our time of worship, that we will come and behold your beauty, your glory in our midst, that through your word and through your spirit, you will minister to us in all our needs, that you will come and remind us, Lord, that we are so dependent upon you, but that you are a God who is able to lavish upon us, grace upon grace.

And we thank you for the way that you remind us of that so often, of your great faithfulness towards us, and that we pray, Lord, that we may come and meet with you anew this evening and come with thirsty souls, longing to meet with you and to know that we have been with God, that we have been in your presence.

And we pray, Lord, that you will satisfy us through your word, that you will give us the rest and the peace that even the psalmist speaks of in the psalm that we've sung together.

And blessed are they in my house that dwell, they ever give thee praise. May that be our song and our portion this evening anew, that we will come to praise your great and glorious name.

So we thank you that you are a God who is living, a God who is worthy of all our worship, a God who is real, a God who no matter what the world might say about you, who will so easily dismiss you or cast you away or speak a word against you.

[ 5 : 09 ] We thank you, Lord, that we come to the one who is our hope, our salvation, and our security. We thank you for your word and how it constantly builds us up, that whenever we feel discouraged or afraid or whether we are full of thanksgiving and praise, we can come to your word and there find a word that speaks and ministers to us.

It reminds us of the hope that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ, a hope that we can never be taken away from us, a hope that is our true security.

You're the one who is our refuge and our strength, an ever-present aid. We thank you for that constant nature, that you are unchanging and unchangeable, and that though we change in this world, that we ever move on in this world and that time never stands still for us, even as we come

and approach the end of another year.

We reflect on it, Lord, and just see how quickly our days and our years will go by. But we pray, Lord, that we will not just look back, but that you will enable us and help us to look forward to and to consider the days that lie ahead of us, even in the uncertainty and unknown nature of them.

We pray then, thank you that you have numbered each of them, that they are known unto you. And we pray, Lord, that you will help us to number our days and to look to you as the one who holds our eternal destiny, that you are the one, Lord, who we can look to, who will guide us in the paths of life divine.

[ 6 : 50 ] And we pray, Lord, that you will indeed lead each of us on the right path. For we know, as your word says, that there is a broad road that many are on, but that road, as we are told, it leads to destruction.

But we thank you for the narrow way, the way, although there may be few on it, the way that leads to life everlasting. And we pray that your word will minister to our hearts anew this evening, that you will speak to us through your word and help us to put our confidence and our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, as we heard already today, the one who is the light of this world, who is able to dispel the darkness of it and who is able to guide us in these paths.

We pray, O Lord, that we will indeed again see Jesus and know him as our Lord and as our Savior. May he become ever more precious to us as we look around us in the chaos of this world.

May we be able to fix our eyes on Jesus continually and remind ourselves day by day and even hour by hour that in Christ we have all that we need for life and for eternity.

So we ask your blessing on us as a people, as a congregation here and those tuning in online as well. We thank you for one another. We thank you, Lord, that we are able to encourage and to help one another and especially in times of need.

[ 8 : 21 ] We are so aware just now, Lord, of the many who are grieving over the loss of loved ones or who are anxious over loved ones and we commit them, Lord, into your care and into your keeping.

We thank you, Lord, for the one another's we read of in Scripture. So many passages and texts that remind us to pray for one another, to encourage one another, to build up one another.

And we pray that we will seek to do all these things for each other. In praying for one another, Lord, we thank you for the strength and blessing that there is in that, that there is unity in the body of Christ so that when one feels the pain, the whole body suffers.

And yet, O Lord, we have the strength in the body too that will give healing and help to those who are feeling a weakness. So, Lord, may you draw near to all in need, whether it is in grief, whether it's in ill health, whether it's in anxiety and worries that so many people maybe cannot see are hidden from the eyes of many, but, Lord, you know, and you know every need that we have.

And so we pray, Lord, that you surround us and help us in all our times of need. We thank you that your word reminds us that you are the God of all comfort and that for every circumstance, every situation, that you have an answer for us, that you have a way to help, a way to uphold, a way to lift us up.

[ 9 : 53 ] And so we commit each other into your care at this time. We pray for our mission as a church too. We thank you, Lord, for not just instruction, but indeed the command that you give us in your word, that as a people, we are to be the light, salt and light of this world, that we are indeed to be sent out with your truth.

And we pray, Lord, that you will help us, help us in all that we seek to do, whether it's with young or old or middle-aged, whatever we seek to do, whether it's in large groups or one-to-one.

We pray, Lord, for words of wisdom. We pray, Lord, for encouragement and strength. We pray, Lord, when we face persecution or answers maybe from people that we don't expect or that even hurt us when we hear the gospel slandered, we pray that you will give us a boldness and a courage to continue to pray and to love those who even maybe despise us as your people or despise you as God and have no time for you, that you would give us love for those people, a love to seek the good for them that only you can give, to change their hearts, to change their ways.

We ask, O Lord, for your goodness to be poured out upon us and upon all your church this day, far and wide, that the riches of your gospel will bear much fruit, that where your gospel is proclaimed, that there will be a call to your people that will build them up, that will encourage them, that will strengthen them, and no matter where they are, how many or how few they may be gathered, Lord, that you will surround your people and encourage them and strengthen them.

We remember especially those who are persecuted, those who suffer for their faith, those who are maybe even living in fear throughout the world of what may come upon them for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 11 : 53 ] We pray, Lord, that they will know you ministering to them and strengthen them in a very special way. And we pray, Lord, for your gospel to go out and convict those souls that lie in sin, those who are so bound in this world and so caught up in the ways of this world, some of it so evil as we see it around us in war and terror and so many acts of violence in our world, but others just blinded by the God of this world and aware of their sins or unaware of the consequences of them.

We pray for you to send your light forth and your truth with great power and with great conviction. We thank you that your word is ever powerful and ever able to save.

And so we pray, Lord, for the power of your spirit to go forth even this day. Remember our nation at this time and indeed remember us as a people in the week ahead as we see the Christmas season and the holiday season coming upon us.

We pray for schools and workplaces and all who will be taking holidays over this time in the midst of travel chaos and weather so inclement at times.

We pray, Lord, for your safety and protection over all who will be traveling to and fro, whether it's coming home for Christmas or going away and visiting family and friends.

[ 13 : 22 ] We pray that you will protect us and keep us all and above all, Lord, that you will help us to remember the Lord Jesus in the midst of all that we see around us, the one who in the midst of all the lights that flash around us is the light greater than any, the one who is the light of the world.

We pray, Lord, for that light to shine brightly in our midst. Remember our young people, we pray for the fellowship this evening and may your blessing be with us in that and for the schools as they close and the teachers and the students alike, Lord, we pray your blessing on each one and ask that you will go before them in all of their days as well.

May you remember us then, Lord, and all who rule over us as a people as we continue to pray for our governments and our royal family. Again, we pray, Lord, that they will bow the knee to you, that they will come and honor you and worship you, something that seems maybe so far removed in our society today, but we know that in the blink of an eye that you can change hearts and we know even in our own hearts how you are able to change and so may you come into their hearts, into their lives and into the lives of our nation and indeed the world to know your power and to know your glory in the midst of us.

We thank you that you have not left us, that you have not given us over to our own ways completely, Lord, but that you are there to be called upon so help us to call on your name and to come in faith, rejoicing that you hear and are able to answer our prayers.

So, Lord, give us that faith to keep believing and keep praying and to go on in your strength as we ask it all with the forgiveness of our sins for remembering, Lord, how far short we fall so often that you will restore us and pardon us and build us up.

[ 15 : 15 ] We ask all this in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for his glory now and always. Amen. We continue to worship God as we sing to his praise, this time in Psalm 63.

In the Sing Psalms version, Psalm 63, the tune is Old 100. We're going to sing from verse 1 to verse 8.

O God, you are my God alone. I seek your face with eagerness. My soul and body thirst for you in this dry weary wilderness. I've seen you in your holy place.

Your power and glory held my gaze. Far better is your love than life and so my lips will sing your praise.

We'll sing from verse 1 to 8 to God's praise. Amen. Amen. O God, you are my God alone.

[ 16 : 23 ] I seek your face with neither hands. My soul and body thirst for you.

In this dry weary wilderness. I've seen you in your holy place.

Your power and glory held my gaze. Far better is your love and life.

And so my lips will sing your praise. I'll bless you, Lord, throughout my life.

and raise my heart to you in prayer. My joyfulness will sing your praise.

[ 17 : 59 ] My soul is filled with riches upon my bed. I'll bless you, Lord, upon my bed.

I lie now, I lie now, and in my thoughts remember you. And in my thoughts remember you.

I meditated throughout the night. I'm in your love, and in your love.

I am in your love. I am in your love. I am in your love. I am in your love. I am in your love. because you are my help alone.

I am in your love. I am in your love. I am in your love. And in your love. I am in your love. I am in your love.

[ 19 : 09 ] You hold me up with your right hand. To you, O God, my soul will cling.

Well, we'll turn to read God's word. Two passages this evening. First of all, in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew's Gospel, reading in chapter 25.

We'll take up our reading at verse 31. Reading down to the end of the chapter, and then we turn to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. Our first reading is in Matthew 25 and at verse 31.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the king will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

[ 20 : 36 ] For I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a stranger, and you welcomed me. I was naked, and you clothed me.

I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer him, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?

And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the king will answer them, Truly I say to you, as you did to one of the least of these, my brothers, you did it to me.

Then he will say to those on his left, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you gave me no food.

I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink. I was a stranger, and you did not welcome. Welcome me and naked, and you did not clothe me. Sick and in prison, and you did not visit me.

[ 21 : 43 ] Then they also will answer, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?

Then he will answer them, saying, Truly I say to you, as you did not do it to one of these, the least of these you did not do it to me. And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Our second reading is in 2 Thessalonians, reading in chapter 1. We'll take up our reading at verse 5. 2 Thessalonians, chapter 1 at verse 5.

Again, it's linked to the reading we had in Matthew, the day of the judgment of Christ. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering.

Since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted, as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, and flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

[ 23 : 11 ] They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day, to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

To this end, we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and may fulfill every resolve for good, and every work of faith by his power, so the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen, and may God bless these readings from his word. We're going to sing again to God's praise. It's a change to the psalm on the notice sheet, which we already had this morning, but we're going to sing from Psalm 27, in the Sing Psalms version, and it's verse 9 to verse 14, page 32 of the psalm book, Psalm 27, at verse 9, in the Sing Psalms version, on the tune of Spore.

O do not hide your face from me, and do not turn aside, your servant in your righteous wrath, for you have been my guide. O God, my saviour, leave me not, do not reject my plea, my parents may forsake me, Lord, but you will welcome me.

Psalm 27, verse 9, down to the end of the psalm, and the Sing Psalms version. O do not hide your face from me, and do not turn aside, your servant in your righteous wrath, for you have been my guide.

[ 25 : 22 ] O God, O God, my saviour, leave me not, do not reject my plea, my feelings may forsake me, forsake me, Lord, but you will welcome me.

Teach me, O Lord, how I should live, and lead me in your way, make strength my path, because my foes oppress me every day.

Give me not over to the will of the evil and enemies, for my earth's right, to stunder me, and we have cruelty.

Yet I am sure, that in this eye, God's goodness I will see.

We call the Lord, be strong, take heart, for him we patiently.

[ 27 : 48 ] Well, we can turn back to our second reading in 2 Thessalonians. Chapter 1. We're going to look at this section that we read, verse 5 to verse 12, but in particular from the middle of verse 7 down to the end, where it speaks about the coming of the Lord Jesus, where Jesus is revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels and flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

And so it goes on. It's a time of year when many people find themselves maybe counting down, counting down the days, whether it's counting down the days to the holiday coming, holiday starting.

Many people are counting down the days till Christmas Day. And then we fast approach the end of this year. And people count down then towards the end of the year.

And eventually you come to those last few seconds of the year, where you count down 10, 9, 8, and the bell rings, and you're into a new year. But as a reminder to us, just as time is constantly going on, how easy it is almost just to wish our days away.

Counting down the days, but to what end? Where are we going? What's the destination we have in mind as all our days go past? In Psalm 90 verse 12, the psalmist says to us, teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

[ 29 : 34 ] So instead of just counting down our days, wishing them away in some ways, instead we are to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. What does he mean by that?

Well, he means that our days pass so quickly. The days, the months, the years, they pass so quickly. And as we approach the end of another year, we approach it in a way where we're on this journey, as we often say, through life.

But what is the aim of our journey? If you go on a journey, so often you have a destination in mind, and you wait for the words to come, perhaps if you're sitting on a train, or if you're listening to your sat-nav guiding you along the way, to say you've reached your destination, or this is the final stop. And you know then maybe you've reached the place that you were hoping to arrive in. But as we look forward this time of year, what do we look forward to?

And what is the destination that we are aiming for? That Jesus himself spoke of it in Matthew's gospel.

[ 30 : 50 ] There we read in Matthew 25. Those words that you hear of the final destination, it's either, come, you who are blessed by the Father, or depart from me, you who are cursed.

He is speaking about two different destinations. The same as what Paul is speaking of here. As he writes to the Thessalonians, he is speaking about the two different destinations that we're going to think about this evening.

Some years ago when we were in Dumfries, this time of year is Christmas time of year, when we had family coming to visit. One day they decided that they were going to go to Gretna, not too far away from Dumfries.

And they were happy to go by themselves, that they knew roughly where they were going, but they had the sat-nav with them just to help them along the way. So they were going to the retail park out there.

They put in the postcode for it, and off they went. They drove for some time, and then they were told that you have reached your destination.

[ 31 : 55 ] And they were on a road in the middle of nowhere under a bridge. They had arrived at their destination, but it wasn't the destination that they expected. Luckily for them, they weren't too far away from where they were aiming for.

But it's a reminder to us that if we're listening to the wrong instructions, yes, we're being brought on a journey, and our destination may not be far off where we want to get, but it doesn't matter if it's just a mile, 10 miles, 100 miles, we're still not in the destination that we're looking for.

And the Scripture reminds us that our destination, our desire should be to be with the Lord and not to get led down the wrong path. And so here, as Paul writes to the Thessalonians, he's writing to these Thessalonians who have much to be thankful for in God, but who are also enduring persecutions and afflictions, as it says in verse 4.

They're suffering much difficulties on this journey through life. And on the other hand, the life and journey of the persecutors and the wicked, it seems in many ways easier and more pleasant.

And the question can often arise, why is this so? But Paul is reminding them to keep in focus the Lord and the destination that he ultimately has in mind for his people, that with God, his plans will work out for good in the end because God is sovereign.

[ 33 : 34 ] And in the verses before us tonight, we're going to be shown the end outcome for both believers and unbelievers, where our journey destination ends. And the end, the ends couldn't be more different.

We have before us the reality of heaven and the reality of hell. And it's heaven and hell as the Bible, the truth of God's word defines it.

Not a heaven and hell of our own making or our own imagination. It is heaven and hell as the Lord presents before us.

With a great challenge and the real seriousness of this matter. What is your final destination? As we journey, what is our direction?

And where is our destination set for? That's what Paul wants us to consider. What is our final destination?

[ 34 : 36 ] Paul challenges us here in verse 8 to verse 12 in particular. And we're going to look at these two destinations before us. First of all, we look at hell and the darkness of it.

As we heard this morning, the difference between light and darkness is really what we see again before us here. The darkness and the torment of hell.

And yet the light and the beauty of Christ and the hope of heaven. So first of all, we see hell and the darkness of it.

And as we go into this, it's so important to see that as we speak of these places, it is not just a made-up place. It's not just something of the imagination of man.

It's so important for us to realize that because the basis of both these destinations is what the Word of God teaches us. And the basis of them is, as we saw in Matthew and here in verse 7 of 2 Thessalonians 1, it is the coming of the Lord Jesus.

[ 35 : 52 ] We're living in this world as if it's a permanent place of residence. But we're just passing through. This is just temporary. And so it's so important, it's vital what we do with our days in this world.

And as the psalmist said, teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. That we may seek and be challenged as to what is our ultimate destination.

The Lord is coming. And very similar words were used by Jesus and Matthew and here by Paul when Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.

That day is coming. That moment is coming. And even though we count down the days and even the minutes and the seconds of this year, there's no guarantee for us that the Lord will not come even before then.

So it again just reminds us of the importance of the now. The today as the scripture speaks of. The urgency of the gospel in light of heaven and hell.

[ 37 : 01 ] And we remember that no one taught on hell more than the Lord Jesus himself just as we read in Matthew. Some people have said that you know it's more important in this day and age that we just maybe forget about hell and don't speak about it.

Show them the love of Christ. Don't try and scare them into heaven by teaching on hell. Just show the love of Christ. But it's important to have both.

And as we think of the doctrine of hell and the reality of hell and we put that before ourselves, that is reminding us even maybe more greatly and truly the love of Christ.

Of what he came to save us from. Of the love of God that gave us son, the love of Christ that gave his life to spare us the reality of hell for ourselves.

And what it cost him was the giving of his very life. So it's so important that we hear the reality not just of heaven and the beauty of that but the reality of hell and the cursing, the darkness, the bitterness of that.

[ 38 : 16 ] Reverend Sinclair Ferguson once told a story from a number of years ago and he's told it of one royal princess who was coming out of a cathedral service in England and she spoke to the dean of the cathedral on the way out and she asked the dean a question.

Is it true, dean, that there is a place called hell? to which apparently the dean replied, madam, the scriptures say so.

Christian people have always believed so and the church of England confesses so. To which the princess is supposed to have replied saying, and then in God's name why don't you tell us? why don't you tell us so? The reality of hell. Hell is an uncomfortable subject and for some Christians it can be an awkward subject, sometimes an embarrassing subject to talk about. We find it difficult. How can a loving God condemn anyone in this way? But it's about seeing the balance, seeing both that God, yes there is a place for sinners who do not repent, but the reality too is that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only thing that can spare us from that darkness.

[ 39 : 51 ] Avoiding the subject, it doesn't make it go away. The reality is always there before us. So why did Jesus talk about it so much?

Why did Jesus often speak about this place hell? Because his longing for people was to know the truth, the reality of not believing, of rejecting the gospel, that without him, the saviour of the world, the reality is eternal destruction.

Why does Paul address it here to the Thessalonians? Again, it's out of his pastoral love of the people, his great concern for them that they would realise what a rejection of Christ means. And why do we preach it? Because we all need to know the reality of it, but also the way away from it. So as we think of hell as we have it here in verse 7 to verse 9, there's three things about it that we're reminded of here.

First of all, it's a real place. It's a real place. Don't just take my word for it, take Jesus' word for it.

[ 41 : 16 ] Because Jesus presents it so, as a real place. Here in verse 7 and 8, we are told that Jesus will be revealed to bring vengeance on those who do not know God or obey his word.

He will come to judge. And he's fulfilling the words of warning that he has already given. In Matthew 7 verse 13, it says, they enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction.

And those who enter by it are many. Enter by the narrow gate. Find your way to salvation, not by continuing on the broad way or the wide gate, as he describes it, that leads to destruction.

The two destinations presented by Jesus, it's a real place. And it begs the question of us, what road are you on?

What path are you on? What gate are you going through? What is the destination that you are on? Jesus again says in Matthew 10 verse 28, he says, do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul.

[ 42 : 36 ] Rather, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. He just reminds us so often, it is a real place.

As one commentator says, this is not the imagination of man. These are not the words of great theologians like Jonathan Edwards or John Calvin or Augustine or Paul himself.

These are the words of Jesus reminding us of the reality of this place, that hell is a real place. there is so many people afraid of so many things today. We are afraid in the world in which we live of so much that may lie before us, but how afraid are we of our eternal destination and the reality of this place, hell.

The second thing we see of this place, it's not a place to joke about. It's not a place to make a joke of.

[ 43 : 51 ] When you read these words, when Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus, they will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction.

It's not a place to joke about. You see it so often, and it becomes more so as the days and the years go on, that hell, the devil, the gospel, it just becomes the butt of all jokes.

The mocking of the Christian faith and Christians becomes more and more. It's amazing how online, you know, for all it's good, now you see so many people just spouting forth all sorts, and

especially when it comes to faith.

Faith, the Christian faith, the butt of all jokes. Jokes have become more and more harsh as the days and the years go on. It's almost like there's no filter on people now, they'll just say anything when they make mockery of the faith, but you just shudder at what you hear.

somebody was just saying recently that they're part of an atheist group in order to save Christians from their way of thinking.

[ 45 : 22 ] It's as if this is their mission, to take Christians back from all these fairy tales as they will describe them, and to bring them back into the real world. And you just shudder at that way of thinking when you see the reality of what the gospel teaches, and what the mocking of God will bring, the punishment that they will suffer, this eternal destruction.

They don't want to hear it, but that's the reality of what we have before us. And there is this joking about even hell being a place, even if it is real, well at least I'll be with my friends.

But what kind of place is it? It's a place of darkness, torment, and gnashing of teeth. It's not going to be a place that's a party and a family reunion.

What so many people look forward to at this time of year is being together with friends and families. This is not hell though. It's not some kind of party for us all to enjoy for all eternity.

It's a place of torment. It's no joke. because it's not a joke, it's a place that we have to take seriously.

[ 46 : 44 ] It's a third as we see a place to be avoided. Some people will say, well at least I'll finally be away from God and Christians.

As if this is something to look forward to. you. And it says here in verse 9, they will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

And if anyone thinks that this is a good thing, it is not. It is the last thing you want to be cast away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

It is the absence of all light, utter darkness. And if the greatest blessing we can have is to know the Lord and his face, his light shining upon us, the reverse is through our greatest curse is to be cast away.

It's a place to be avoided. And the only way to avoid it is to come to the light, to come and put your trust, in the Lord Jesus so that you will not hear these words that Jesus said, depart from me, you cursed, into eternal fire.

[ 48 : 12 ] We have these great truths before us. Henry Alford once said, the most dreadful torment of the lost, in fact, that which constitutes their state of torment will be this coming to themselves when it is too late for repentance.

It's like the story of the rich man and Lazarus. It'll be too late. Knowing the reality of hell, then, what does that mean for your journey and your final destination? salvation? Are you safe on the narrow way or are you in the broad way that leads to destruction? Is it time to turn?

Hell is real. Hell is not a joke. Hell is to be avoided at all costs. And that's why we give thanks to God for his gospel, for the good news that shows us another destination, another place that we should all long for.

As we are told of the reality of hell, we give thanks to God for the reality for all who believe that at the coming of the Lord, the Lord will say, come, come, you who are blessed by the Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, the place we know as heaven.

[ 49 : 51 ] And the way to that is through Christ, through the light of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. We long for peace in our world today.

We pray for it. And even if it comes, though, it will not compare to the peace and blessings of for God's people in this eternal destination of being with him.

Even the way Paul describes it in another place, he calls it being home with the Lord. The destination for all who believe to be home with the Lord, to be in his presence forevermore.

And when we think of the difference here between the darkness of hell and the light of God's kingdom, what should that do for us?

As we are reminded here of why Jesus came to spare us from that darkness and to lead us into his wonderful light, what should it do for us?

[ 50 : 59 ] Well, when you look at verse 10 and 11, the contrast is so stark. when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints and to be marveled at among all who have believed, the difference is there for us to see.

Night and day, darkness and light, those who believe will glory in their Lord. He will be marveled at among those who have believed.

we will praise his name forever. And so what should that do for us? Well, it should drive us to our Saviour. It should drive us to the Lord Jesus.

As Paul warns here of the punishment of eternal destruction, those who believe the reverse is true, eternal blessing.

The great gospel invitation is to come, but to come for what? Well, that gospel invitation that we have so often, as we see in John 3, 16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish, this eternal destruction he's speaking of, but have eternal life.

[ 52 : 27 ] Again, as we were hearing this morning, that light of the Lord Jesus is the light of life, and life eternal, which should drive us to our Savior.

Life, it isn't like a computer game. If you enjoy playing computer games, you often find that you've got a number of lives.

You can gain extra lives, you can claim them. This is not real life, though. We only have one life to live, one opportunity, and today is that opportunity.

Today is that time to come. As Charles Studd once said, two little lines I heard one day, traveling along life's busy way, bringing conviction to my heart, and from my mind would not depart.

only one life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. This reality of these destinations should drive us to our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 53 : 43 ] It should bring us to our knees, begging with him, what must I do to be saved? and it should drive us secondly to prayer.

That's what we see here in verse 11, to this end, we always pray for you that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and may fulfill every resolve for good, and every work of faith by his power.

It should drive us on in prayer. salvation belongs to God, but he is a God that longs to save.

He is a God that longs for our people to turn in repentance, to turn to him and to call out on his name. Like so many of the Psalms that we sing, they speak about looking for this path of life, this path divine, and as Psalm 25 says, show me thy ways, O Lord, thy paths, O teach thou me.

It's this crying out to God to show us the way, the way that is life and light through Christ, so it should drive us to prayer.

[ 55 : 05 ] The third thing and final thing we see of the reality of heaven and hell as well as it should drive us in our mission. In our mission as a people of God, in our mission as a church, as a denomination, it should drive us in this mission.

If we know the reality of hell and the reality of heaven and that being in one final destination is to be lost eternally, or to be in the other is to be saved eternally, that shouldn't just wash over us.

It shouldn't just go past us and not make us think, what are we doing for those who are lost? It should drive us in our mission.

Why did Jesus teach so much on hell? Was it to scare people? No. It was that they might hear the good news of the gospel beside that and turn in repentance to him.

And so it should drive us in our mission to reach out with the gospel today in the same way that Paul was encouraging the Thessalonians to go on in the faith, to stand up to those who would mock and persecute the Christian faith and continue to be salt and light in the midst of this world.

[ 56 : 27 ] It should drive us on. They knew they had light. They knew they had the light of Jesus Christ that made so much of a difference in the darkness of this world.

And so should we to know that we have the light of Christ and to shine it forth before all others.

Charles Spurgeon once said this.

It's such a powerful way of looking at it. He said, if sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our dead bodies.

And if they perish, perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let no one go unwarned or unprayed for.

What a challenge to our mission. As a church, is that the way we live? Putting forth the gospel of Jesus Christ in this way with passion, conviction, and power of Christ, with our arms wrapped about their knees, pleading for people to be saved, to repent, and to turn.

[ 57 : 57 ] Should that not drive us on, the reality of hell and the reality of the other destination, and the beauty of heaven, to put that before people too, to see the blessings that are ours in Christ.

J.C. Ryle, he once said this, and if you're a Christian, be encouraged in this. He said, Christian, look up and take comfort.

Jesus has prepared, a place for you, and those who follow him shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hands.

Look forward to that glorious dwelling he has provided. Look forward in faith, for it is yours. What a contrast.

The beauty of heaven, a place prepared by the Lord Jesus, a place that we should long for all to come and be in, and the way is through Christ, the light of the world.

[ 59 : 10 ] So we have the reality of hell, the place of darkness. It's not a place to be joked about because it's a real place.

It's a place to be avoided. It's a place that Jesus presents to us again and again. But thanks be to God, he shows us the gospel, the good news, and another destination, a place prepared.

And so tonight, as we come and maybe count down the days to the end of the year, ask ourselves, what is our destination?

and pray to God to teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom, and the wisdom that is before us in the word of God.

The reality is there is a hell, a place of punishment and eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, the last thing we should want.

[ 60 : 20 ] But praise God, that when he comes, he may find us, as Christians, as those of faith, taking comfort and consolation in him, that when he comes on that day, to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed.

Where and in what number will you be numbered? The broad way or the narrow path? The destination is before us.

But thanks be that Christ is before us too. So may we look to him who has gone before and to prepare a place for us.

May God bless his word to us. we're going to conclude by singing the well-known psalm that we sing so often, Psalm 23, but our psalm that again just reminds us of the way to that glorious place. the Lord who is our shepherd. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want. He makes me down to lie in pastures green. He leadeth me the quiet waters by.

[ 61 : 39 ] And verse 4, yet though I walk in death stark veil, yet will I fear none ill, for thou art with me, and I rod and staff me comfort still. And then the last verse, goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me, and in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be.

We'll sing the whole of this psalm to God's place. The Lord's my shepherd, I'm the one.

He raised me down to lie in pastures green me leadeth me the quiet waters high.

My soul me doth restore again and need to walk the pain within the realms of righteousness in what his own may stay.

Need though I walk in death's dark fail, yet dwell like here the ill.

[ 63 : 38 ] For thou art with me and thy walk and shall be come for still.

My deep love has furnished love hath furnished in presence of my foes my head the dust with oil anoint with oil anoint and like a over close to this and mercy all my life shall surely follow me follow me and in God's hands forever more my dwelling place shall be after the benediction i'll go to the main door we'll close the benediction now may grace mercy and peace from God father son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with us all now and forevermore amen to