

Love at Christ's Cross

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[0 : 00] to nations then let's begin our worship this evening and we're going to sing first of all from psalm 65 psalm 65 using the traditional scottish psalter version page 299 the tune is harris field we're singing verses 1 to 5 all lands to god and joyful sounds aloft your voices raise sing forth the honor of his name and glorious make his praise say unto god how terrible in all thy works art thou through thy great power thy foes to thee shall be constrained to bow so through to verse 5 come and the works that god has done with admiration see in his working to the sons of men most terrible is he and of course terrible in these verses is used in the old sense of awesome the awesomeness of god as he declares himself and shows himself through his work so these verses all lands to god six six uh it's psalm 65 so it's verses 1 to 5 of psalm 65 thank you to the presenter who's alert more than i am um so praise waits for thee in zion lord to thee vows paid shall be without that here at art of prayer all flesh shall come to thee so it's page 297 and it's psalm 65 praise waits for thee in zion lord in zion lord to thee vows paid shall be with which for thee in zion lord to thee vows paid shall be o love that here at art of prayer all flesh shall come to thee jiffel

In the Christ Jesus I must confess, Reveal against me too, But us for our transgressions Then perch away shall flow.

He blessed the man whom love us choose, And is supposed to be, That he within thy courts, O Lord, May still and forever be.

We surely shall be satisfied With thy abundant grace, And with the goodness of thy heart, In all thy holy grace.

God of our salvation, Thou live in thy righteousness, Thy fearful words unto our faith, Thy answer does justice.

[4 : 45] For the ends of all the earth, And those that are not free, Upon the sea their consequences, O Lord will bless them thee.

Now let's once more call upon the Lord in prayer. Let's join together in prayer. Our gracious and blessed God, As we give thanks for these great words we have sung, We give thanks for the many truths contained in them, And for the way that they bear upon the experience Of your believing people.

And we thank you, Lord, That our salvation is in your hand. We thank you for the way that it contains so much That we ourselves appreciate and benefit from, From day to day.

We thank you especially for the emphasis in these words Of your forgiveness of sin, And for the way that you hear those who come With their cry in repentance, Seeking that you would forgive their sin And cover their sin from your sight.

And we, Lord, confess as a congregation That this is an important element In our congregational worship too, As well as in our own private confession of sin.

[6 : 20] And so, Lord, Tonight we pray that you would forgive and pardon our iniquity. For we bring our transgressions to you, Confessing, O Lord, That they exceed our ability to number them or describe them.

But we give thanks that they are all known to thee. And we give thanks that they are all known to the God Who has made such provision for them, Against them, In the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we give thanks, Lord, Tonight that we can come to you, That we can draw near to you, That we are not in a position where our sin Is marked against us For our everlasting condemnation.

We give thanks that as we come, We are confident That you will receive us in the Lord Jesus Christ And for his sake. We thank you for all that We experienced already today On this Lord's day.

And especially we give thanks For seeing a baptism And partaking of the Lord's Supper And being witnesses of it. And we pray that that will be blessed to us As we continue to dwell our mind Upon the great realities That are set out therein.

[7 : 32] Our being washed from our sin. Our communion with Christ. Our partaking of the benefits Of his atoning death. O Lord, our God, Make us thankful increasingly That we have such privileges given to us.

Make us thankful that you did not leave us In the darkness of our own minds. That you gave us to be Recipients of such grace And of such benefits.

We pray tonight again, Lord, For your Holy Spirit to work among us. And we give thanks, O Lord, For the evidences we have From time to time That you are actively working In people's hearts.

That you are bringing them To know yourself. And bringing them to confess this Before their fellow human beings. We give thanks that you are active In adding to the number Of your confessing church.

And we pray, Lord, That as we have witnessed that Already in these past few days. So we give thanks And give thanks for the encouragement That this gives us. That your word Does not return to you empty.

[8 : 38] But that as you send it forth With the power of your spirit. And so you come To change people inwardly. And you come To draw them to yourself. And you come To constrain them And to persuade them.

To make it known To others as well That they are your people. That you are their God. We pray, Lord, For those Who were first-time Recipients Of the Lord's Supper Today.

We ask, O Lord, Your blessing For each and all of them. We pray for Catherine And Yendon And Myrdo We thank you For the encouragement It gives us To see them Taking this step.

We pray that you Would keep them That you would guide them That they may know Your protective care. And when the evil one Comes at times To attack them To seek to draw them Aside and away From being obedient To you And following you.

Lord, grant them The strength To resist and overcome. And help them To continue To depend Upon the Lord Who is faithful To all his people. And we thank you That as they have Shown their faith And their hope In action, Lord, so that you Would continue To watch over them And graciously bless Them from day to day.

[9 : 50] Bless all others, O Lord, Who also sat At your table today. We ask that you Would continue To bless us Through these means Of grace In word and sacrament.

We ask, O God, That it may prove To be for our Furtherance As a congregation That you would Grant your blessing To us as a people In whatever ways, O Lord, You have gifted us And we thank you For the many gifts That are found Within this congregation And for the way That you persuade So many people To use them To the furtherance Of your great name Of your great name And cause.

And we pray That you bless All the work That is done From week to week And throughout each week Along with the worship Services of the congregation. And Lord, Bless them, We pray, And continue To bless those Who give of their time So freely And do so So selflessly In particular In regard to the teaching Of our young people And their care And their welfare To those who arrange Other meetings Throughout each week From time to time We pray, O Lord, That all of these May prove to be A further blessing To us as a people.

We pray too, Lord, For those others Tonight Who meet as we do Throughout this town
Throughout our islands Throughout our nation And we pray That your people May be
encouraged And that we may see Movements of your Holy Spirit Bringing many others To
know you And to follow you And to testify for you And we pray For those today In places of
influence And importance In our land And Lord, When we face another General election
To elect a government Over us We pray That you would guide us We pray That we may
have The light Of your truth As we come to choose The government And we pray That
you would Direct us, Lord, As to who to choose And where to cast Our votes We thank
you For the liberty We have in doing this Help us, Lord, Whatever temptations We may
have To withdraw From that process Even if we find That those who May not be To our
liking Are brought before us As candidates

Nevertheless, Lord, Help us, We pray, To exercise Our great privilege And freedom In coming to Elect those Who would be In government Over us We pray That you would Grant your blessing To us As we seek Your guidance As your people During this time We pray your blessing Tonight for All who can't be With us Especially those Who are ill Be near to them Lord, We pray And those who Mourn The passing Of loved ones We commend them To you Asking your comfort Lord, To be their portion Asking that you Would draw near To them And that you Would give them That stillness Of mind That would reflect Upon matters And bring them To yourself Remember, We pray All today Throughout the world Who have Such different Circumstances to ours Oh Lord We think of the Many places In the world Where war Continues to Blight the experience Of people Where many people Continue to Lose their lives And homes

[13:04] And other goods As well We pray For the situation Ongoing in Ukraine And for the dangers That exist there And for the further Encroachment Of oppression Upon the Ukrainian people Oh Lord We pray That you would Grant your own Intervention Grant that you would Stay the hands Of the aggressor We pray such as well In other parts Of the world Where violence Whether in the Middle East Or in other places Where violence Blights the lives Of so many people Lord send forth Your light And your truth Bring people To peace With one another And especially Bring them The peace Of the gospel And we ask That that may be so To the furtherance Of your own kingdom Be with us then Now we pray As we wait upon you Be with us later In the fellowship To grant us there The sense of your presence And the blessing Of your spirit Hear us We pray now In Jesus name And for his sake Amen

Well we'll sing again To God's praise This time we're singing From Psalm 9 Psalm number 9 9a That's on page Number 9 And we'll sing Verses 7 to 12 And we're singing To a tune Martyrs The Lord forever reigns On high His throne For judgment Stands He'll judge The world In righteousness With justice Rule the lands The Lord will be A hiding place For those Who are oppressed And he will be A strong defense For those Who are distressed All those Who know your name O Lord In you Their trust Will place For you do not Abandon those Who seek Your gracious face So on to verse 12 From verse 7 The Lord forever Reigns on high His throne For justice

Remember haste evermore I cry, O Thee Ungrated One, Thee never will be more.

[17:43] Now we turn to read God's Word in the Gospel of John. The Gospel according to John, reading chapter 19, and beginning at verse 17. So we'll read from 17 right through down to verse 42.

So John 19 at verse 17. So they took Jesus and he went out bearing his own cross to the place called the place of a skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

There they crucified him and with him two others, one on either side and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.

Many of the Jews read this inscription for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin and in Greek. So the chief priest of the Jews said to Pilate, do not write the king of the Jews, but rather this man said, I am king of the Jews.

Pilate answered, what I have written, I have written. When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier, also his tunic.

[19 : 04] But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said to one another, let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.

This was to fulfill the scripture which says, they divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. So the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, woman, behold your son. Then he said to the disciple, behold your mother.

And from that hour, the disciple took her into his own home. After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said, to fulfill the scripture, I thirst.

A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, it is finished.

[20 :13] And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Since it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for the Sabbath was a high day, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness. His testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth.

That you also may believe. For these things took place, that the scripture might be fulfilled. Not one of his bones will be broken. And again another scripture says, They will look on him whom they have pierced.

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission.

[21:24] So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds in weight.

So they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid.

So because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there. Amen again.

May God bless to us reading that portion of his word. Let's now sing from Psalm 25. That's on page 29. Psalm 25 and verses 8 to 15.

Let's sing into a tune this time as Finart. Psalm 25 and verse 8. And so on down to verse 15.

[22:49] Because the Lord is just and good. He shows his heart to all his game.

He guides the weak in what is right, and teaches them this holy way.

And so to keep his calm and loss, he shows his love consistently.

For he is so and good. Oh, Lord, my God, forgive my gate in equity.

Then not those to fear the Lord, he'll teach to them the choice.

[24:11] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. This morning we looked at those who sat down in the vicinity of the cross and kept watch, and we considered some of the things that they would have seen, some of the things that they would have heard as they passed the time there while Jesus was being crucified up to the time that he died.

And tonight we're going to look at love in relation to the cross. Because what you find happening here in the care that's taken over the body of Jesus by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea is indicative of the love that they had for him.

And love indeed that showed itself in going to Pilate, asking that he would release the body of Jesus now that they knew that Jesus was dead.

[26:30] And so they carefully took the body from the cross. They carefully treated it in the manner of the Jews for burial. And they dealt with it in a way that showed great love and affection for these remains of Jesus, humanly speaking.

And so that love in relation to the cross is another important aspect of how that cross bears upon our own experience, how the death of Jesus relates to our love for him, and how that is something which we also seek to commend to others from time to time.

And we need to consider something of the background to these verses, something of the background indeed to these two people as they came here to take the body of Jesus and treat it with respect and with love.

And we call that love becoming public. Love becoming public. Because both of these men were disciples of Jesus, but up to now they were that secretly.

They hadn't made it known that they were actually believers in Christ. That they were trusting in Christ. That they were actually disciples of Jesus.

[27 : 52] You can see the reason secretly for fear of the Jews. That's why they had kept it previously hidden. Nobody knew apart from themselves that they were, as far as we can see, that they were actually disciples of Jesus.

And you can understand that because the persecution they would face from the members of the Sanhedrin that they belonged to would have been intense. And that had been made known even to other people as time went on, as they followed Jesus, that anybody who came to confess them would be thrown out of the synagogue.

And so you see that the way in which they kept that hidden is, in fact, very understandable. Very understandable because of the situation that they were in.

And because of the relative danger as well that would come from making known that they were disciples of this Jesus that the scribes and Pharisees wanted to be rid of. And as far as they were concerned was an imposter who blasphemed and took to himself the title of the Son of God, which they did not see he was entitled to.

And although you understand where they were coming from and understand the reference that they were doing this secretly for fear of the Jews, there's nothing at all in any of the passages dealing with this that suggest for a moment that this really actually was quite a commendable thing.

[29 : 20] It's understandable, but it's not actually commendable. Because nowhere in the Bible do you find anything to suggest that when we come to know the Lord, we really should just keep that to ourselves and go about our own business and not make it public and not actually have to face whatever we need to face in coming out publicly to say that he's our savior, that we are his people.

And so here is love that previously was real, but didn't come into public light because they were afraid of the Jews, afraid of the ruling authorities.

Both of these men were in the ruling council of the temple, members of the Sanhedrin. And so they were afraid of their fellow council members that this would really make trouble for them if it became known that they were disciples of Jesus.

But nowhere do you find that that's actually something commendable. God doesn't praise that, although it's understandable why they were like that.

And so tonight, you may be a secret disciple of Jesus. You may be a true believer in Christ. But for whatever reason, you've not yet made it known, such as those today who came and sat at the table, some for the first time have made it known, this is my Lord, this is my savior.

[30 : 42] I want to serve him. I want to make it clear that I am his, that he is mine. So if you are here tonight and your trust is in Jesus, but you haven't yet made that known, think about what that means to him.

Think about all that he's done for you so as to save you from your sins. Think of the love that has gone towards the death that he died as we saw this morning.

Think of his commitment as we saw it to his death, despite everything that was tempting him to draw aside from that, to turn back from that. And as you think of the commitment of Jesus, the love of Jesus, the way that Jesus saw it through right to the end, even refusing what might indeed have dulled his pain.

Think tonight if you're here and you're not yet openly following Christ. Think of how he sees that. Why should you keep it hidden when he did all this for you?

Why should you not make it known? Why should you not be at the next communion, God willing, and sitting with the Lord's people at his table? Love needs to be made known.

[32:04] Love indeed will at some point make itself known. And for whatever good reason they had to keep it hidden, there's nothing there that would say this is actually a good thing.

And so for all of you today who are here and have not yet come to take communion or taken the step of making known that you are Christ's, please consider what that means.

And if you're here tonight and you've not yet accepted Jesus, if you know the gospel as you do, and I've heard many times of Jesus actually being offered to us in the gospel, offering himself to us in the gospel, why should you be amongst those who have not accepted him?

Why should you be left out of salvation through Jesus and in Jesus? Why should you go on to live and go on living without him when you know that God in his word commands him as one to love, one to serve, one to trust in, one to look forward to meeting in heaven?

This is love previously hidden and love actually now revealed. And when you go to Mark's gospel, Mark chapter 15 and verse 43, you read there that they took courage.

[33:24] He actually went and took courage to demand or to request really of Pontius Pilate, the governor, that he would release the body of Jesus.

Joseph himself, a respected member of the council, who was himself looking for the kingdom of God, as Mark puts it, he took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Now, there's one thing that's going to give you courage, is to actually contemplate the death of Jesus, the cross of Jesus, and to contemplate for yourself what that means to you, what he's done for you.

And that really surely brings courage to the fore so that you come out as well, even if you would not say of yourself, well, this is a very courageous thing to do.

It's the right thing to do. And certainly in that context, it was a courageous thing to do because it was difficult for them knowing what might result in consequence.

[34:21] And there are many people tonight in the world who have far more difficult circumstances than any of us have, or most of us at least have. Places in the world where coming out on the side of Christ will almost inevitably lead to your death, especially where there are authorities that have either an antipathy to the gospel one way or the other, or follow other different religions that are in antipathy and indeed at times a hatred of the gospel and a hatred of Jesus.

These people actually have to come as they believe in Christ and come to make it known that they are Christ's people and make it known that they follow him, that they are indeed disciples of Christ.

We have the privilege of the freedoms that we have and our difficulties are relatively small compared to the difficulties of other disciples in the world who have come out and said, no, this is where we stand.

We love him. We want to serve him. He is our Lord. And we want to make it plain that we are a believing people who follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith takes courage from the death of Christ, from contemplating what that death has meant to the person who is a disciple. You can go to chapter 12 here, for example, and find another example of that, a real difficulty outwardly.

[35:50] And for this woman, in chapter 12, Mary, who anointed Jesus at Bethany. This is how the chapter begins, six days before the Passover. He came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

And they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served. Lazarus was one of those reclining at a table with him. Now just think of the context. Very, very public thing.

Here was Lazarus, who'd been raised from the dead, gathering, grabbing the notice, if you like, of so many people around who knew that he had been buried, that he had in fact died.

And yet here he was, sharing a table with the Lord, with Jesus. Mary, therefore, took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair.

And she's saying about him, I can't let this opportunity go without showing my love for him, without showing what he means to me, without showing that he is just so special, that although this is a very costly ointment, I have to use it and I have to spend it and I have to pour it out for him.

[37 : 04] And of course, Judas Iscariot said, why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor? He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief and having charge of the money bag.

He used to help himself to what was put in it. And Jesus said, leave her alone so that she may keep it or she has kept it for the day of my burial.

You see, she saw in Jesus the one who was going to die for her sins. And here she is showing her affection for the cross, for the death of Jesus, for the Jesus who is about to die.

And this is what she does. It's not too costly for her to spend this on him, to pour this out on him. You know, sometimes we think about the cost of following Jesus.

And in a sense, of course, there is a cost to following Jesus. You attract attention. There's difficulties and challenges facing you in confessing your faith in Christ in a world that largely doesn't want to know him.

[38 : 11] But what is cost compared to the cost for him? What is the cost of this very expensive ointment compared to the Jesus on whose body this was poured out?

You see, for Mary, it's not costly at all. It's the least she can do. For Judas Iscariot, hypocrite as he was, this is far too much to spend on Jesus.

And you'll find so many people in the world that will say to you tonight, you surely don't want to give your life to him. You surely don't want to spend that much of time with him or energy for him. Surely that's just a bit of a waste, really.

Think of all else you could do with your life instead of coming openly to be one of Jesus' disciples. Well, it's not too much when you consider what he has done for his people.

And we've come from the Lord's table today. And now here at the cross, we find Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus coming into the open, showing their love for Jesus and love for his body now, hanging on the cross.

[39 : 21] Surely you're saying, I have to do that as well. I can't let this moment pass and just let the world go on thinking that I don't belong to him. I will do what they did.

I'll come out and I'll show that I love him and I love what he's done for me. So there's love becoming public.

But secondly, let's look at love's action towards this Jesus. And the first thing you notice here is that Joseph had a tomb, which actually was his own tomb.

It was taken and created for himself a garden, in the garden, a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. And from Matthew's Gospel, chapter 27 and verse 60, you find this was actually for Joseph himself.

He had prepared this tomb for himself long before this or sometime before this, before he ever came to carry the body of Jesus and place it there.

[40 : 24] And so, that was for himself to begin with. But here he is saying, no, actually I'm going to give this to Christ. I'm going to give this for his body.

This is not going to be for me after all. It'll be for him. It'll be for him who did this for me to die the death that he died on the cross. And it was a new tomb.

It was significant that nobody had ever been an occupant of that chamber. Nobody had ever been in that tomb. It was for Joseph himself. And that's significant too because it's set apart exclusively for Jesus himself.

Now, when you think of that and go to the Old Testament, let me just turn your minds to Psalm 45. Psalm 45 is a royal psalm. A psalm that anticipates Jesus.

A psalm that's prophetic of Jesus. And all the way through that wonderful psalm, you'll find the psalmist expressing his love. My heart overflows with a pleasing thing.

[41 : 29] My address, my verses to the king. You are the most handsome of the sons of men. Grace is poured upon your lips. And then he appeals to him to ride out victoriously to conquer his enemies.

And then he comes to verse 6. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of righteousness. The kingliness of Jesus.

Remember this tomb that Joseph had, which was for himself originally, is now coming to be provided for Jesus, who is, as we saw this morning, the king, despite the fact that he was mocked for claiming to be such.

Therefore, God, your God, has anointed you. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes.

Who would have thought that these items would have been seen in the anointing of Jesus' dead body prior to his burial? How wonderful the scripture is, just as we find in Psalm 22, such a reference minutely to the way that his body was pierced and his hands and his feet.

[42 : 41] So here you find a reference to the kingliness of Jesus. And all the way through, you follow it through, and you can see that it says that all glorious is the princess in her chamber.

You can take that as an emblem or a picture of God's people as the church that are married to Jesus. What does he say? With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king and so on.

But what I'm saying is that here is an example of Jesus, the royal king, that he is. And you go to John's gospel there and you'll find that this tomb that's given specially for him is really amounting to a royal burial.

It amounts to the burial of a king. It's the least he deserves to have a tomb in which no one was ever yet laid. And there they laid Jesus.

Now notice that. Since the tomb was at hand because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

[43 : 53] Now you go to the other gospels that speak mostly about his body. That's not absent obviously from this passage. But why does it say here in the final words they laid Jesus there?

It doesn't say they laid his body there although that of course is what was happening. but John saw fit to say they laid Jesus there. Why is that? What makes the difference?

Why is he saying this? Well because I think we're led into how the burial of the body of Jesus was something that was attached so closely so intimately to his person.

Remember when you think of the person of Jesus who is this Jesus? You don't think of his human nature to answer the question who is he? You go to his divine nature as the son of God.

He is the son of God. That's his identity. The son of God who has taken human nature to himself but he is the son of God and that's what identifies him.

[44 : 55] And when it says here that they laid Jesus there the experience of death the experience of being buried was something that was experienced by the son of God.

We're not saying that God in his divine nature died which could not be but it is the son of God the divine son of God the second person of the Trinity that God is who comes here to experience his being buried bodily.

And that's so important too for us because Jesus experienced every aspect of death that belongs to death. We saw this morning spiritual death the death he experienced in his soul which was something of the greatest possible pain separation from God.

And if you go to the likes of 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 4 where Paul says I delivered to you what I received from the Lord. It's so significant that in terms of that summary of the gospel what Jesus had given to Paul to then deliver in the message of the gospel it actually involves also includes that he was buried because the apostles saw this as an important emphasis and element in thinking about the death of Jesus and what followed.

They specifically mentioned that he was buried and in our own catechism in our own confession of faith as well these documents those who drew up these followed the scriptures which referred to him being buried that that was part of his humiliation he died on the cross and he was buried.

[46 : 53] And in other words it's part of what 1 Corinthians 15 puts of first importance Paul says that's what I delivered to you that which is of first importance how that Jesus died for our sins according to the scripture that he was buried that he was raised again the third day.

Now there's understandably a fear on our part to some extent at least of the grave when you stand at an open graveside a dot to give us a chill I've done that nearly 300 times even since I came here to Stornoway and every time you stand there which should actually have that impact upon us you're seeing death in that body being laid to rest in the tomb separated from the soul that has gone to eternity very solemn sight something that really in some sense fills us with a sense of dread and it's understandable that we would fear the grave but you know as a believer in Christ if you're tonight a believer in Christ you need not fear the grave you need not fear your body being laid into the earth and returning to dust why?

because he's been there before you because he the pioneer who has defeated death has actually experienced even that aspect of death so that as he comes to be raised from the dead bodily so that says to you and to me I can see now that death in all its completeness has been completely vanquished that spiritually and physically death is swallowed up by him and therefore why should I fear what happens to my body when I know that Jesus in terms of his body was laid in the tomb there they laid Jesus he's been there ahead of us already so love's action in providing this new tomb love's action in taking the body of Jesus lovingly and carefully and laying

Jesus in that tomb and love's action finally in the fact that here you have a garden and it's interesting how the Bible sometimes presents us with certain teachings involving a garden when God created us in the beginning as you find in the opening chapters of Genesis he placed Adam and Eve our first parents in the garden of Eden they were surrounded by plenty they were surrounded by everything that was good to see and good for them they were surrounded by God's provision they had access to everything there except the one tree that God had forbidden which of course sadly they came to partake of with devastating results and in each of these gardens here's a garden as well verse 41 in the place where he was crucified there was a garden and in the garden a new tomb in the garden of Eden sin led to death and death always involves a grave or most of the time apart from those who were taken away from this world without seeing death such as in the

Old Testament you find Enoch but here is by and large what happens to every human being we die our body is then laid into the dust in our tradition and practice that happened in the garden of Eden what led to that grave you could say that the grave for human beings was created in the garden of Eden in consequence of human sin a rebellion against God in the day in which he said to Adam in the day in which you eat of it you shall surely die that's what happened and here is another garden and while it is indeed the case that the grave was created in Eden the grave was consecrated in this garden near the cross Jesus his body laid there went into death went into the tomb you might say to prepare it for his people because every

[51:49] Christian can say as they come to lay down their life as their life ebbs away in whatever circumstances as they think of dying in this world every Christian can say and has the right to say though my body is going to be laid into the grave though my body maybe for many many years will be laid there and return to the dust from which I was created in the beginning that grave has been prepared by the Lord Jesus Christ and I shall arise out of that grave triumphantly because he's done that for me and before me so why should we fear the grave here's the wonderful emphasis in the gospel that Jesus has been through every phase of life and even of death itself and every single aspect of that process of that journey has actually been prepared by him for his people and when you come to

Revelation chapter 21 let me just read these four verses as we come towards the end of our study this evening Revelation chapter 21 which really brings us the account we have there of heaven heaven after all things have been dealt with the judgment is passed he says I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more and I saw the holy city the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of God is with man he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away and as you describe as you find the new

Jerusalem described in the following parts of the chapter the one thing that's prominently noticeable is there is no reference to a cemetery no reference to a grave there are no graves there is no death there is no cemetery in the city of the new Jerusalem the death has been overcome death stands defeated beneath the feet of God's people in Christ they have overcome in him what a prospect what a glorious outlook you have as a Christian in this world that this is actually what lies ahead of you and that even though the grave lies in between it's a defeated grave it's a prepared grave it's a grave in which the Lord has already been laid it's a grave that he occupied it's a grave that he rose out of it's a grave that he defeated for his people and it's a grave therefore that you need not fear there is no more death it's gone forever my friend tonight is your trust in

Christ are you looking forward to a life with no death death because remember the opposite is also true there is nothing in hell but death there is no prospect of being delivered from death eternal death lasting death there is no voice that says come to me and I will give you rest there is no assurance that will say this is only for a short time and it will end just put up with it and it will be alright in the end remember the opposite of heaven is hell in every sense and you don't want to go there that's not what you want your eternity to be you want your eternity to be without death without a grave without anything associated with death you want it to be gone how does that come about comes about by giving your life to Jesus by trusting in the one who has overcome death if you like being like

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea they went and asked Pilate boldly for the body of Jesus what did they then do with it they took it down from the cross they treated it respectfully they covered it with a linen shroud they then buried Jesus in this new tomb and figuratively is that not something for you as well do you not want tonight to take this Jesus into your arms to take this death of Jesus the Jesus who now lives and make that the basis of your hopes love so that your love too will come to be seen as a love that comes into the open and public a love whose action towards the Lord is made known to those around you so that you value him and in valuing him you give him in your heart the reception that they gave to his body as they came to treat it with respect after all he said in contrast to the false shepherds in John chapter 10

[57:44] I have come that they might have life and have it the more abundantly that's the life that you want the life that you need the spiritual life you have it in Jesus and in receiving him as your savior and you cannot have it and you will not have it any other way let's pray oh gracious and eternal God we marvel at what you willingly took to yourself in the place of your people we marvel that you took even the death we deserved even though it was something that took you into the depths and the darkness of Calvary's cry in the forsakenness that you experienced we thank you tonight that you are risen from the dead that you have been exalted to glory we thank you gracious and glorious Lord that you stand over death triumphantly that you invite your people to share with you in that glorious victory over death that you call upon us tonight through the gospel to come to you and to give ourselves to you to trust in you and to realize oh

Lord that this indeed is the way the truth and the life and we ask that you bless your word to us once again be pleased to bless us in the fellowship bless to us the food prepared also for us there in all of these ways oh Lord we pray your blessing for Jesus sake amen our final singing tonight is Psalm 22 Psalm 22 we associate the first part of the psalm very often with what we do in remembering the Lord's death and the Lord's supper indeed we almost always sing from this psalm in that context but tonight we're singing verses 28 to 31 and that's on page 229 the tune is Bethesda which speaks about the way in which the Lord will have a people to serve him as the result and the fruit of his labor for them because the kingdom to the Lord doth appertain as his likewise among the nations the governor he is and verse 31 they shall come and they shall declare his truth and righteousness unto a people yet unborn and that he hath done this so these verses then to God's praise and conclusion well

God means come and come and he■ed us in the trag dismissal Writes among the nations That gather on the is That that one's deep That worship shall All who do us descend Shall walk to them One of them come

Restore from the end of the end As he shall serve This true to him Unto the Lord Is shall Before a tender nation Reckoned in ages To the Lord Is shall Is shall Come out They shall Declare This truth And righteousness And to a people

Yet am Born And that he Have done Is Well Colin Mordor and myself Will take the front doors again This evening I'll go to the door to my left And he can go to the other side Let's conclude now with a benediction Now may grace and mercy and peace From God the Father The Son and the Holy Spirit Rest and abide with you now and evermore Amen Thank you Thank you!