

The Promise of a Future

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

Date: 22 September 2024

Preacher: Rev Thomas Davis

[0 : 00] Dear God, our Father in heaven, we are so, so thankful that we can come together this evening to worship you in the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and that we can worship you in the presence of your Holy Spirit.

And as we come to you, our God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, we pray that you would still our hearts and we pray that we would come in a posture of worship, of joy, of thanksgiving, and of hunger. Because as we come to you this evening, we come knowing that we need you so, so much. And so we want to come before you and bow before you. And as we've been singing, recognizing that you are our maker, our saviour, our God, our King.

And we want to come and bow before you. We want to lift our hearts and our eyes to you in praise and thanksgiving. And we want to hear your voice speaking to us through your word. Because, Father, we need you more than anything else. And we need you more than we even realize ourselves. And so we pray that as we come here together, that we would meet with you, that you would bless us, and that we would all be drawn closer to you.

[1 : 15] So, Father, we pray that you would help us as we come to you just now. We're so conscious that we can do nothing on our own. But we thank you for all the promises that you give us, for your promise to be with us, to help us, to speak to us, to teach us, and to build us up.

And we pray that as we come together this evening, that we would be renewed and refreshed in our faith, that we would be taught and built up in our minds and our understanding, that we would be strengthened with greater courage and determination to obey you and follow you in our lives.

And we pray that our hearts would just burn with ever deeper love for you and for one another. So we pray that you would bless us as we gather here this evening.

And we thank you for everybody who is here tonight. And as we come together, we come with so many different needs and with so many different burdens that we carry.

And we just want to pray, especially for any who are here tonight who have had a really tough week. We pray for any who are here just feeling tired or anxious or bruised.

[2 : 24] We pray for those who are maybe feeling that their faith is hanging by a thread. We pray for those who feel discouraged. We pray for those who are anxious about people that they love and who are coming to you this evening with sore hearts and anxious minds.

We pray, Father, that whatever our circumstances, that you would meet with us all. And we pray that we would hear your voice speaking to us in your word. We thank you so, so much for the gospel, for the words of eternal life spoken and demonstrated in our Savior Jesus.

And in all that you have woven together across the pages of Scripture as you've accomplished your purposes. And we just pray that we would hear your voice more tonight. And that for all of us, you would meet with us and build us up, binding us closer to one another and leading us on so that we can serve you in all of our lives.

And we want to especially pray for anyone here or anyone in our families or in our workplaces or around us where we live who do not yet know you. We pray, Father, that you would be working in people's hearts.

And we pray that for those who've got no word of you, that you would just press eternity into their hearts and that you'd unsettle them and that you would get their minds questioning and get their hearts seeking so that they would look to you and realize how much they need you.

[3 : 49] And we pray for those who are seeking you and for those who maybe know how much they need you but who are struggling to come to any sense of assurance or certainty. We pray that they would just see the simplicity of the gospel, that they'd hear your voice calling their name tonight and that they would just be able to receive and rest on Jesus Christ for their salvation.

And we pray that for those of us who are following you, we pray that we would be built up and encouraged in our faith as we seek to live out our lives for you. As we do that, we are conscious, Father, that so often we fail and we come tonight confessing our sin before you.

And we do that with sorrow and with frustration, aware that very often it's not just new sins that we fall into, but often it's the same old ones that we keep slipping back into.

We confess that before you and we come to you tonight in repentance and we want to turn away from sin. And as a new week begins, we want to go into that week obeying you and following you and listening to your voice speaking to us in your word.

And we thank you so much that as we confess our sin before you, we do so knowing that the promise of the gospel is that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

[5 : 01] And how we thank you for that promise. And may the reality of that cleansing in the gospel just energize us as we seek to serve you in the days ahead in our lives.

We want to pray for anyone who's in particular need in our communities or connected to this congregation. We pray for those who grieve, asking that you'd comfort and sustain and help them. We pray for those who are unwell just now.

We pray for those who are under pressure at work or with other responsibilities in their lives. We pray for those who struggle with addiction, asking that you would help them to turn to you and that you would break the grip of addiction in their lives.

And we pray for any others for whom these may be difficult days. And we know that for people around the world, these are very difficult days in some areas.

We pray for war-torn regions. We pray for areas of conflict. We pray for areas of disease and shortage and famine. And we just pray for all those, Lord, who are just suffering so much just now.

[6 : 01] And we pray for those who are in authority and able to make decisions or that they would make decisions that make for peace and for justice and for healing and for hope.

And more than anything else, we pray that people all across the world would hear the good news of Jesus and turn to him and find the peace that only you can give.

And so we pray that your blessing would be upon each one of us. Bless this congregation, bless all the work that they are doing and guide them in the days ahead. That they would just be a beacon of hope and light and joy to Stornoway.

And that you would build them up and that you would immensely bless the work of the gospel here and across our island in all the days that lie ahead. We pray that in it all, your majestic name would be glorified.

And it's in that name that we pray. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing again, this time from Psalm 119 in the Sing Psalms version on page 159.

[7 : 03] So Psalm 119, we're singing the fifth part, verse 33 to 40. Psalm 119 on page 159. I love Psalm 119.

It's a psalm that speaks so powerfully of just recognizing the beauty of God's word. And as we're singing to God's praise in these words, we're also committing ourselves to follow the teaching of God's word.

Praying that it would shape every part of our lives. And that's one of the amazing things about the Psalms. They're songs of praise and they're beautiful prayers. And so we praise and pray to the Lord together as we rise to sing these words.

We'll sing to Rockingham, Psalm 119. Teach me to follow your decrees. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Teach me to follow your decrees.

And I will keep them to the end. In this I come, I'll keep your love.

[8 : 28] With all my heart to it attend. Lead me in your forgiveness, God.

For there, O Lord, delight I find. In the Lord, delight I find.

In the Lord, delight I find. From selfish gain, please stand my mind.

O time, my eyes from worthless things.

Get life according to your word. To be, O Lord, delight I find.

[9 : 48] To be, O Lord, who will be, O Lord. To be, O Lord, who will be, O Lord.

You look on me, O Lord. You're lost and self in uprightness.

O Lord, O Lord, who will be, O Lord. Please send me in your righteousness.

Amen. Amen. Amen. We're going to read God's word together in the Gospel of John and Chapter 11.

John Chapter 11.

[11 : 06] And we'll read from the beginning. It's on page 108.1 of this Bible, but it might be different in the Bibles that you're using. John Chapter 11, verses 1 to 44. Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sister sent to him, saying, Lord, he whom you love is ill. But when Jesus heard it, he said, this illness does not lead to death.

It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this, he said to the disciples, let us go to Judea again. The disciples said to him, Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you. And are you going there again? Jesus answered, are there not twelve hours in the day?

If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him. After saying these things, he said to them, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.

[12 : 24] The disciples said to him, Lord, if he's fallen asleep, he will recover. Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought he meant taking rest and sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, Lazarus has died.

And for your sake, I'm glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him. So Thomas called the twin, said to his fellow disciples, let us also go, that we may die with him. Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.

So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you'd been here, my brother would not have died.

But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you. Jesus said to her, your brother will rise again. Martha said to him, I know that he'll rise again in the resurrection on the last day.

[13 : 26] Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

Do you believe this? She said to him, yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world. When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, the teacher is here and is calling for you.

And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, Lord, if you'd been here, my brother would not have died. When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

And he said, where have you laid him? They said to him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. So the Jews said, see how he loved him. But some of them said, could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?

[14 : 45] Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, take away the stone.

Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, Lord, by this time there'll be an odour, for he's been dead four days. Jesus said to her, did I not tell you that if you believed you'd see the glory of God? So they took away the stone and Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank you that you've heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around that they may believe that you sent me.

When he'd said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out. The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips and his face wrapped with the cloth.

Jesus said to them, unbind him and let him go. Amen. This is God's word. May he add his blessing to it.

[15 : 47] We're going to sing again together, this time from Psalm 37 on page 252. So that's in the Scottish Psalter version. Psalm 37 on page 252, singing from verse 3 to verse 7.

Set thou thy trust upon the Lord and be thou doing good. And so thou in the land shalt dwell and verily have food. This little section that we're going to read, verses 3 to 7, has three wonderful commands.

It says, set thou thy trust upon the Lord. It says in verse 4, delight thyself in the Lord. It says in verse 7, rest in the Lord. And these are three wonderful things for us to do as we sing together. So Psalm 37, verse 3 to 7, stand and sing to the tune Evan. And so thou in the land shalt dwell and verily have food.

Feel like thyself in what you give.

[17 : 20] Thy heart's beside to thee. Thy way to go, go with him trust.

Good thing God.

For like noontide of the day. Praise Him, the Lord, and patiently Wait for Him, do not pray For Him who prospered in His way The sustenance in the day.

As we turn to God's Word, let's just pray for a wee moment. Father, as Your Word is opened before us, please may we be open before You. Give us ears that can hear, minds that understand, and hearts that burn with love for You.

Amen. I'd like us to turn back to John 11, and let me read again at verse 25.

[19 : 23] Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet he shall live.

And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? The Bible is full of amazing promises that God gives to His people and that God continues to give to us today. Promises that run right through from Genesis all the way through to Revelation. And in so many ways, the Gospel rests on these promises of God.

And one of the wonderful privileges that we have when we come to study God's Word together each week is that we can come and hear these promises from God anew.

We can unpack them. We can think about them more. Because life is so often full of broken promises. So often things don't go the way we want them to go.

[20 : 31] So often we are hurt and let down by other people. So often things turn out the way that we wish they hadn't.

So often life can be difficult. And in all those difficulties and challenges that life can bring, the promises of the Gospel are what give us hope and comfort and strength.

And one of the most amazing promises that God gives is found in these verses that we're going to look at tonight. So we're going to think a little bit more about the words of John 11, 25 and 26.

And as we do that, we're going to ask four questions. What does this promise tell us about God? What does this promise tell us about ourselves? What is God promising?

And what does God require of us? So first of all, we're asking the question, what does this promise tell us about God? As we read, the context around these verses is the illness and death of Jesus' friend, Lazarus.

[21 : 48] And as we read, Jesus had heard reports that Lazarus was ill. He had waited a little longer before he travelled to Bethany.

And by the time he arrives there, Lazarus has died and he's been in the tomb for four days. As Jesus approaches Bethany, Martha, one of Lazarus' sisters and a close friend of Jesus, comes to meet him.

And John records their conversation. Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you'd been here, this is verse 21, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.

Jesus said to her, your brother will rise again. Then Martha said to him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. And it's in response to these words that Jesus gives the magnificent promise of 11, 25 and 26.

And that, of course, is one of the great I am sayings that we find in John's gospel. But what does it teach us about God? Well, what I want us to think about tonight in this section is that here we are being reminded of the connection between God and life.

[23 : 06] And so it's so crucial that we maintain that connection. And if you look at the conversation, Martha has been confronted by death. Her brother has died.

And her response to that is to look to Jesus. And Jesus responds by telling her, your brother will rise again. Martha replies by saying, well, yes, that's true.

He's going to rise again on the last day. And what Martha says is true, but it's not the whole truth. Because Martha believes in the resurrection, but when she thinks of it, she thinks of the resurrection as a thing that's going to happen then.

In other words, it's an event that lies in the future. That's not wrong. But it's not the whole truth. Jesus responds to that by saying, I am the resurrection and the life.

Now, I want to just unpack that statement a little bit more. First of all, Martha was thinking of resurrection as a thing that's happening then. It's an event sometime in the future.

[24 : 15] Jesus directs her to himself. And he says, I am. And this, as we said, is one of the seven I am sayings that we have in John's gospel, along with I am the light of the world, I am the way, the truth, and the life, etc.

These are crucial descriptions of Jesus. And in all of them, there's a very deliberate link to the nature and character of God himself.

I love the fact that the two smallest words in the Bible, I am, are probably the two most important words in the whole Bible. Because if you think back to the Old Testament, particularly when Moses met Jesus, when God met Moses at the burning bush, God reveals his name.

And his name is these words, I am who I am. And so when Jesus says, I am, it's actually a really loaded phrase because it's making a direct connection to God.

All of this is teaching us about who Jesus really is as God the Son. It's teaching us about God. And so Jesus says, I am the resurrection.

[25 : 24] And he says, I am the life. And these two words, resurrection and life, these two words are pointing us to what we could call, we could call them meta realities.

Now that's just a fancy way of saying big stuff. It's making us think about the big stuff, the big questions, the big realities of life. And in many ways, if you think about it, the resurrection is pointing us to the very end of history.

It's pointing us to the last day, the end point in the history of the universe. It's the big moment that everything is heading towards. And if you think about the word life, and if you kind of stretch what lies behind that word, we're thinking about the big reality that makes the universe more than just existence.

When you look at the universe, it doesn't just exist. It's not just a lump of stuff. The universe contains life. Earth is not just a bare planet.

It supports life. And so if you think about it in those terms, we start to realize that resurrection is pointing us to the very last day, the climax of everything.

[26 : 39] Life is actually pointing us back to the very first day, thinking about where that came from, thinking about the source of everything. And that's why we're saying that this is talking about meta realities.

We're talking about the source, where everything has come from, and the destiny to which everything is going. And you think to yourself, okay, that's the big stuff, the big meta realities. And we ask the question, what lies behind those?

And that's a question that the whole world has spent centuries trying to answer. What lies behind everything? And some people might think, well, nothing.

And there are many people who would hold that view today. Others might think more in terms of like a force, maybe a force of physics, like gravity, maybe something to do with biology, like DNA, maybe more something like fate or chance or something like that.

Other people think that behind those realities is just a machine that keeps going round and round and round in circles, that life just keeps on going round and round and round. Lots of people have different ideas as to what lies behind these big meta realities.

[27 : 52] The Bible tells us something different. The Bible tells us that behind these meta realities is a person. And that means that according to the Bible's worldview, the absolute that underlies all reality is a person.

Now, that person has life. So he thinks and speaks and acts and wills and relates. And that person gives life.

He's the source from which all other life comes. And all of this means that the foundation of life, the foundation of all meta realities is not something, it's someone.

A true, real, living someone. And that person is Jesus Christ.

He is the one who lies behind it all. If you imagine it a wee bit like this, if any of you like listening to music, imagine maybe you like listening to Ed Sheeran on Spotify.

[29 : 08] If anyone's not heard of Ed Sheeran, he's just, he's like a not quite as good version of Costello. And you like listening to him. And you think to yourself, well, I love listening to him on my Spotify, so I'm going to go and see him.

And so you book a concert in Glasgow at the Ovo or whatever location it might be. And you think, oh, I'm listening to this music.

I've got my tickets. I'm going to go. And I'm finally going to get to see Ed Sheeran. And if you got there and all you saw on stage was a guitar and a stand and a chair and a voice recorder, you'd be thinking, that's not what I came to see.

And it would make no sense. The whole thing only works if Ed Sheeran is there himself. In other words, from the first moment when you've listened to an Ed Sheeran song to the day when you finally get to an Ed Sheeran concert, behind all of that music is a person.

And the Bible is saying that exactly the same is true of the universe. Behind it all lies Jesus.

[30 : 32] Now, that tells us two incredibly important things. It tells us, first of all, how massive this statement is. When Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life, he is saying something massive.

He is saying that he is the foundation of all reality. He is the end point of all reality. You cannot have a first day or a last day without Jesus.

He is the center of all existence. He is the ultimate meta-reality. And so we're discovering how massive this statement Jesus makes is.

But even more so, this is showing us, this whole passage is showing us, that the someone who lies behind all existence, the absolute from which everything else comes, is someone who is utterly lovely.

He's kind and wise and patient and fair and true and compassionate.

[31 : 41] And this is one of the amazing things about what the Bible teaches us. If you peel back the universe to find its ultimate source, you find loveliness. you find all the beauty and goodness and grace of Jesus.

And perhaps most importantly of all, what you discover is that this person is a son. He is a son who has a father. This means that he's not solitary, he's not isolated.

Instead, he is relational. From all existence, he has existed in this beautiful relationship between God the Father, God the Son, where the love, the infinite, eternal love between them is carried forth by the Holy Spirit.

He is loved, he loves, he is dependent, he is dependent upon, he is precious to his Father, his Father is precious to him. All of this is pointing us back to the Bible's absolute of all reality, the living God, the persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Now, I hope all that makes sense. A lot of that's very big stuff to think about. I hope that that's not too complicated. Put simply, Jesus is telling us that the absolute that lies behind reality is not a dead thing.

[33 : 06] It's a living person. It's him. And that means that the norm for reality is not deadness.

The norm for reality is life. And that's an incredibly important thing for us to remember. And I hope we'll see that in a moment. We need to go on to question two.

What does this promise tell us about ourselves? Well, the big thing that I want to highlight here is that this passage is telling us that your life is precious.

Now, you might be thinking, well, I know that. And we all spend a lot of our time trying to preserve and protect our lives. But what I want us to see is that your life actually matters way, way more than we tend to realize.

we tend to think that life is precious because it's short and fragile. And that's true in so many ways. And we want to protect ourselves because we know that actually our lives sometimes we're confronted by the fact that we realize our lives are actually hanging by not very much and it's far more fragile than we sometimes realize.

[34 : 24] And so we think when your life is short, life goes by so quickly and so we think we need to make the most of it. We need to protect it. Life is precious. So we tend to think life is precious.

Be careful with it. Life is precious. Make the most of it because it's short. God doesn't think like that. God thinks in a way that is far better.

God thinks life is precious. Make it last forever. So when we read of Lazarus being ill when we read of two sisters losing their brother we think well that's a shame but it's normal.

And Thomas sums it up really well in verse 16 when he said to the other disciples well let's go to Bethany so that we can die with them. Because to Thomas to the disciples to all of these people death just seems inevitable and we think like that as well.

So though we try to push it away though we try to protect ourselves from it when it does come we kind of resign to it and think well death is going to come. It's inevitable. We just have to accept it.

[35 : 35] Jesus does not think like that. Jesus does not think like that. Because from Jesus' perspective death is not normal.

Death is not inevitable. Death is not acceptable. death is fundamentally wrong. And that's brought out very very powerfully in this passage but we don't actually see it very clearly in the English translation that we have before us.

So if you look at verse 33 of John chapter 11 it says that when Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her also weeping he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And so when you read that verse you tend to think of Jesus sees Mary coming and sees her weeping sees the Jews with her also weeping and you see his heart I don't know how you describe it but you see him feeling sorrowful and moved and sympathetic and sad to see them suffering. but deeply moved isn't really what the word in Greek means. The word in Greek that describes how Jesus felt in this moment actually means outraged.

[36 : 55] It's a word that means angry means very angry. Jesus is outraged at what he sees and that's so important for us to recognize because to Jesus the illness and the death of this man was wrong and the pain that these sisters felt was wrong and the agony of separation that many of you have experienced is wrong because to Jesus death is not just this inevitable part of life that we hate that we have to accept to Jesus death is an utter outrage and if you think about it no wonder it's an outrage because he is the source of life he is the one from whom life has come and here it's as though Jesus is standing before the tomb of his friend and his arch enemy is mocking him as though to say look at this you didn't get it in time look at this your friend's gone look at this there's another one in the tomb and there's many many more coming look at all these precious people dying

Lazarus is just one of the many many lives that you can't save no wonder Jesus was outraged and no wonder he says take that stone away and no wonder he says Lazarus come out and in doing that Jesus is giving us a glimpse of what his mission is all about he has come to give life he has come to defeat death and all of that tells you that your life matters and I want you to recognize that whether you are young and hoping for a lot of life ahead of you whether you're in the middle like me and you're like well I don't know if I've got as much ahead of me as I do behind me or whether you're further on and you're absolutely aware that most of your life story lies behind you I want you all to recognize that your life matters and so if you are ill and your body is suffering because of the fact that sin has left us decaying if you are hurt where life has bruised you and battered you and knocked you and if you are confronted with death either the fear of death yourself or the agony of death in losing somebody you love I want you to realize that the absolute of the universe is outraged and why is he outraged because your life is precious because you matter to him so what is God promising that's our third question go back to verse 25 Jesus said to her I am the resurrection and the life whoever believes in me though he die yet he shall live and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die do you believe this as we said a minute ago in this passage and for all of us in our experience there's just a kind of inevitability about death you see it in Thomas you see it in Martha and Mary and they kind of come saying if only you'd been here as if to say well obviously otherwise it's just completely inevitable and we all face the same reality so no matter what our lives are the final clause in our life story is always going to be yet he will die yet she will die and so you might get a brilliant job and you might have a really successful career and everything might go every way you dreamt of in terms of what you achieve in your work yet you'll die you might be able to build the house of your dreams and you think everything that you dreamed of and you build the house and it's there and you make a nice garden and it's just everything that you wanted it to be yet you'll die and you might think well I really want to make a name for myself and many people have made a massive name for themselves and even the people who are the most famous in the world have the same final clause in their life story yet she'll die yet he will die it's inevitable and all the other stuff just kind of shrinks in terms of its significance the

house the job the success the fame the whatever because our death is inevitable and it takes all of that away and the key point

I want you to see in these verses is that Jesus is promising us a new inevitable Jesus is promising a new inevitable so if you look at verse 25 you can see that the clause where it says though he die so you see it just towards the end Jesus said though he die I was useless at English in school so I don't really know the grammatical term for this but basically those three words have what we could call it actually doesn't matter statement because that's what's being conveyed here the fact that those three words actually don't matter they're not the final story those words don't have the final say what has the final say is the words that come after in other words the though she may die though he may die but in the sentence is not the inevitable but there's a new inevitable the new inevitable is that we shall live and there is no comeback on that everyone who believes in [43 : 13] Jesus shall live and that means that for everyone if you put your trust in Jesus if you are a Christian or if you become a Christian the final word for you is not yet you will die the final word for you is yet you will live yet you will live forever with Jesus so you might have an absolutely awful week this week yet you will live you might get a terrible diagnosis this year and maybe some of you are living with those diagnoses yet you will live you might not get the job or the house or the marriage that you dreamed of yet you will live you might have your heart broken many many times in this life yet you will live that's the new inevitable that the gospel promises and it all makes perfect sense because the reason your new inevitable as a person can be life is because the absolute of the universe is a living person who gives life and that's so so crucial for us to recognize this is how we need to understand reality and this is where what the bible teaches and what everybody around us thinks are completely opposite because the world tends to view reality a little bit like this

I don't nothing nothing nothing nothing nothing nothing and then there's this wee blip of life for a few billion years where the universe comes into existence and there's life and everything and all that stuff and slowly it all starts to burn up and disappear until the end it all collapses and we go back to deadness so it's a little bit like you start with death there's start with deadness there's this this anomaly in the middle called life and then there's a death erection at the end but everything just becomes dead again and that's actually how most people would view reality in Britain today the Bible says the opposite the exact opposite in the Bible's worldview the norm is life life is what everything came from the life of the living

God father son and holy spirit the anomaly in the middle is death that's the intrusion sin has brought in something that was never meant to be there something that has ruined what God has created and that's why it's all going to end with a resurrection everybody restored to life everyone appearing before the judgment seat of the living God and the whole point of Jesus mission is to break the power of death to undo that anomaly to put right the wrong and to give you life and at the heart of that life is two things that we see in this chapter there's individual preciousness and precious togetherness individual preciousness and precious togetherness so Jesus restores your life for everyone here who's a Christian for everyone who becomes a Christian Jesus restores your life because you as an individual are precious and so he died to take your sin he died in your place and you are united to him in the power of his resurrection because you as an individual are precious but Jesus also restores your life so that other people can enjoy your company and so that you can enjoy theirs so that there's this beautiful togetherness in the new humanity that Jesus is restoring through his death and resurrection and you see this so clearly in Lazarus

Jesus wept at the grave of this individual this dear friend who Jesus knew and loved Lazarus the individual mattered to Jesus and you as an individual matter to him as well but the amazing thing about Lazarus is that you never hear him talk when you look at all he's like a key figure in the gospel but you never hear him talk instead he's always described in terms of his relationship with other people so he's described as a friend as a brother and in chapter 11 his death is mourned but in chapter 12 you find Lazarus again and he's having a meal with his friends everyone is enjoying being together and so Jesus promises you life because you are precious to him and because you are precious to others that there's this collective preciousness this beautiful togetherness that lies at the heart of the gospel and the result is that for all of us who trust in Jesus we can enjoy this amazing togetherness and I think that the meal that Lazarus shares is a glimpse of this

I think it's a beautiful picture that Lazarus has died Lazarus is restored to life through Jesus the very next thing we see him doing is having a meal with his friends with his fellow believers and I think that that's a beautiful picture of how the gospel works because you as an individual are saved and

then you're brought into this beautiful family called the church where precious individuals enjoy beautiful togetherness side by side and it's all reminding us that the new life that the gospel gives starts now and the church is always meant to be a glimpse that the world can see of all the beauty and joy and goodness of the life to come in the new creation and that's why as we come to faith in Jesus we leave sin and deadness behind and again you see that reality in Lazarus because when Jesus calls him out of the grave Lazarus comes out and his hands and feet are bound with linen strips his face is wrapped with a cloth Jesus said to them unbind him and let him go and [49 : 37] I think that there's an incredibly important truth conveyed in those words unbind him and let him go we come to faith in Jesus and sin still kind of has its grip on us we're still wrapped with all the mess of our mistakes and all the kind of bad choices that we make and all the attraction that we have towards sin and all the attitudes that have been just cultivated in a life that's not centered on Jesus and then as we come to faith in Jesus and turn to him and follow him Jesus is saying get all that off you unbind him let him go live in the freedom of the gospel in other words live life have the life that I created you to have love and that's why there is such an amazing change now for everybody who comes to faith in Jesus but ultimately it will be fully enjoyed then at the resurrection when we will be brought into the new creation and when you look at the Bible's descriptions of that new creation the descriptions picture just beautiful togetherness of God's people enjoying life you've got imagery of a heavenly banquet you've got imagery of a marriage supper of the lamb nobody has a banquet on their own nobody has a marriage on their own it's all about togetherness Jesus reclaiming us from the kingdom of darkness restoring us to life and bringing us into his kingdom where we can enjoy the fullness of his life together oh God is promising us so so much and you think of every single way in which life is rubbish just now every way in which friendships are broken families are torn apart every time we're hurt by other people every time we feel lonely every time we feel isolated every bruise that's hit our heart then it's going to be none of that ever again instead we will be together every single believer will be together with Jesus and we will see the most beautiful version of one another as the power of sin is broken forever and the grave clothes are fully unbound and fully left behind and together we will reflect the beauty and glory of Jesus together in his kingdom what is God promising us he is promising us an amazing life that begins now and that will last forever last question what does God require of you for all of that well the answers in our verses he wants you to believe in him everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die and the key point here is that that Jesus is not asking us to believe things he's not asking us to believe information he's not asking us to believe even in a particular world view we're not being asked to believe in things we're being asked to believe a person he's asking us to believe him and that's where it all comes together perfectly the absolute of the universe is a person Jesus and all that's required of us is to believe in him to trust him and it's reminding us that the whole gospel is to be understood in terms of a relationship no wonder because the absolute of reality is the triune God in an eternal perfect beautiful relationship and at the heart of any relationship is trust and you know that's true in any family in any work relationship with friends in any way in a church for a relationship to function there's got to be trust and when trust isn't there you either have enmity where people fall out or you have manipulation where somebody might be trusting somebody but they're actually not trustworthy and they're not doing or being what they said that they would be a true healthy relationship involves trust and that's why being a Christian doesn't mean bargaining with Jesus it doesn't mean you think you know well okay I well Jesus if you do this maybe for me then I will follow you that's not the basis for the gospel nor does being a Christian mean impressing Jesus it's not saying well Jesus look I I think I can do this I'll try I'll make sure I don't make that mistake again and I'll keep it as good as I can be that's not the gospel and it doesn't mean using Jesus where we think well oh yes Jesus I'm in a crisis right now can you help me and then we go through the rest of our lives as though he's not there at all that is not what the gospel involves the gospel involves trusting him and that's all it involves we trust him and follow him so often we make make two mistakes when we approach the gospel and we do this as Christians and we do this as non-Christians so often we play down or minimize what we think Jesus will do for us and we amplify what we must do for him so we kind of we kind of minimize what we think Jesus will do for us so we sometimes think well Jesus is important but he's probably going to spoil my life and maybe you know I know that my sins need to be forgiven but I kind of don't really want to surrender my independence and he'll maybe he'll maybe kind of get in the way of my life a wee bit or we might think well yes

Jesus he'll give me the ticket to heaven that I know I'm going to need when I die but just now I'd kind of quite like to just keep him to one side in my life because we kind of think that you know what Jesus is probably going to just interfere with my life or spoil it or do something to me that I don't want him to do so we kind of play down what we think Jesus will do for us and at the very same time we amplify what we need to do for him so we think well okay I need to learn more I need to understand more I need to be better at attending church I need to become more diligent in my my my personal study time and devotions I need to make sure that I don't make these mistakes and I need to kind of actually just get my life in order and then I'll be able to follow Jesus so we have these two views where we kind of minimize what Jesus has done or we reduce it we kind of amplify what we have to do both of them are completely wrong the gospel is the opposite what Jesus will do for you is beyond anything that I can describe

Jesus's love for you is deeper and stronger than anything that I can convey and Jesus's promises for you are bigger and better than anything that I could set before you with my words tonight and what Jesus will promise what Jesus is promising us in the future when we we will step into the new creation and we will be there for one second and we will think wow this is beyond anything that I imagined and so what Jesus will really do for you is just way way way bigger than what we imagine and what Jesus requires of you in in comparison to that is never bigger than one word believe you don't need to add any extra requirements to that you don't need to bring any impressive knowledge you don't need to you don't need to know this that and the next thing all you need to do is believe in him and that's what makes the gospel so amazing that's the astounding truth of the gospel Jesus is saying I am the resurrection and the life I am the absolute of the universe I am the source of all life I am the beginning and the end you are precious to me your life matters I've come to save you from death I am outraged by the fact that death is threatening you I have come to save you in fact I have come to die instead of you and though you may suffer and though you may get ill and though you will die physically yet you will never die because

[58 : 22] I'll never forget you and I will delight over you and I will delight in you being with me for all eternity along with all your brothers and sisters that is the promise of the gospel that is what Jesus wants and Jesus is saying for all of that to happen for you to receive all these promises I will do everything I'll do absolutely everything you don't have to do anything just trust me and that's when we see that the question at the end of verse 26 becomes the most important question you'll ever ask do you believe this amen let's pray Lord Jesus we just thank you so much for who you are you are the resurrection and the life and thank you for everything that you've done for us and help us all just to live out this week and every week of our lives and with our minds and our attitudes and our whole lives shaped by the gospel by the reality of who you are and of everything that you've done and if there's anyone here who's maybe not yet come to faith or not sure I'll help them just to hear that beautifully simple command to believe amen we're going to conclude with I think the greatest resurrection song that was ever written psalm 16 and we're going to sing the sing psalms version on page 17 and we're singing from verse 7

I'll praise the Lord my God whose counsel guides my choice and even in the night my heart recalls instructions voice this is and the words we're going to sing are quoted in the New Testament all directly referencing the resurrection of Jesus Jesus and we can sing with joy down to the words of eleven you have made known to me the path of life divine bliss shall I know at your right hand joy from your face will shine we'll sing to the tune Golden Hill and we'll stand together amen I'll praise the Lord my God whose counsel guides my choice and even in the night my heart recalls my heart recalls my instructions voice before me constantly I said the Lord alone before me constantly I said the Lord alone he voice and I'll king the bell the Lordden home my heart clearly knows his favorite the man who died by ■ a lot of choices and and and for the more mie heard the Lord soisten to the Lord through me Fed can however he heard my heart tell them life
With glory we'll sing My holy tomb Will be secure In war of me For you will What I love My soul In death to stay How will you In your holy heart To see Aogenic day
You are I know that you I can For in hope your face will shine As you go into a new week together May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The love of God And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all Amen Amen