

The Hope of Glory

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[0 : 00] Wrapping up our session with prayer. So let me begin with prayer this morning. Father, we thank you for the hope of the redemption of our bodies and our glorification with you when you return.

We thank you that, Lord, you not only bless us and take care of us and provide for us in the present age, but we thank you that you have promised us eternal life through Christ.

And we pray that our hope for the future would impact how we live in the present today. Help us as we consider these topics. Pray that this would be a fruitful session this morning as we conclude this class.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. All right. So the topic today is the hope of glory, the future of our bodies, gender, and sexuality.

These are our three topics that we've looked at in this class this fall. Why God made us with bodies. Right. He didn't make us just like the angels. You know, the angels, you know, are spiritual beings and sometimes will appear in bodies, but don't seem to have bodies.

[1 : 04] But God made us with bodies to reflect his glory. And he made us male and female to reflect the, in some ways, to reflect the relationships within the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, being in relationship with one another and with human beings.

He made us male and female to reflect that sort of difference and unity, obviously. And also one aspect of God making us male and female is that's how human beings reproduce.

Right. That's how we fulfill the commission to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, which is sort of what we saw in Genesis. And that's a good thing.

That's part of God's creation. And obviously it's intended to be fulfilled in the marriage of male and female and in raising children for God's glory.

But what we're looking at today is where is this all going? Right. We've looked at some of we've also looked at some of the sort of distortions, how are our how we sort of use our bodies and and experience our being male and female or our sexuality, how we how we can use those things in ways that don't glorify and honor God and some of the challenges and temptations and just difficult things that we face in this fall.

[2 : 29] And the world. So we've looked at homosexuality. We've looked at transgender identity. We've looked at pornography. We've looked at sexual assault. But I don't want to end this class on sort of one of these heavy and difficult topics.

I want to end this class where the Bible ends, which is with our eternal hope. So I hope you've got a handout and there are handouts at the front from the last two weeks.

If you have missed one of those and their handouts from this week, if you don't have a handout, they're right here and somebody will make sure you get them. All right. So as believers in Christ, what is our future hope and how does for our bodies, gender and sexuality, how does this hope for eternity make a difference for us today?

So I want to go back to the first. I made three points in the first lesson, which you've probably all forgotten. Right. But about our bodies and our gender and our sexuality all being created by God.

So I want to rehearse those and then talk about where that's going in the future. So in the beginning, God created us with bodies and called them good. I feel like I'm getting an echo.

[3 : 32] So I'm going to turn that down. In the end, our physical bodies will be resurrected, raised from the dead and liberated from their bondage to decay. So where do we see this?

Romans 8, right, this wonderful chapter about our Christian hope. Paul says we know the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the spirit.

Right. We've come to experience the Holy Spirit who's been sort of given to us as a deposit, sort of with a promise of more to come. We also groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

For in this hope, we were saved. Right. Paul saying when we were saved, when we were brought into relationship with Jesus Christ, we're given this hope that one day our bodies will be fully and finally redeemed and freed from their bondage to decay.

Now, but we might ask, like, what's that going to look like? Like, right, what's it going to look like for us to have a resurrected body in the new creation? Right. And there's a mystery to that.

[4 : 43] You know, in several places, Paul insists that we can't imagine how glorious that's going to be. Right. No eye has seen, nor ear has heard, nor the heart of man imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.

But, Paul says, we do have a little clue. Paul insists it's not going to be something that's completely disconnected from our present existence.

Right. So, Paul uses an analogy in 1 Corinthians 15 of a seed that grows into a tree. Right. Now, when you look at a seed, how many of you can look at a seed and then imagine what the tree is going to look like?

Well, no, you can only do that if you've seen the tree. Right. You can only do that if you're a gardener and you know what kind of seed you're dealing with and you've got that little, you know, picture on the front of the packet of seeds.

And you know what is. But that's cheating. Right. If you just had the seed, if somebody gave you a seed and said, this is going to grow into a beautiful tree. Can you imagine, just by looking at that seed, what it is?

[5 : 46] No. But, let me ask you this. Does that tree grow out of that little seed? Yes. Right. There's the analogy Paul's giving us between our present bodies and our future resurrection bodies.

So, Paul's saying, we can't imagine what the tree is going to look like. But, we're living in that seed. We're walking around with it every single day and carrying it around with us wherever you go.

Right. That's our present bodies. And God's going to sort of take out of our present bodies when we, through, right, what does the seed have to do?

The seed has to fall into the ground and die. Right. In order to produce a tree. Right. So, it's only, again, through when we die and are raised with Christ or when Christ comes again.

You know, if that happens before we die. Okay. And that will, then, Christ will raise us from the dead. Right. So, he will take our present bodies and make it into our future bodies.

[6 : 48] So, Paul says what, I won't read this whole verse, but it's in 1 Corinthians 15. What you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel. But God gives it a body as he has chosen.

So, it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable. What is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness.

It is raised in power. It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. That last one is a hard one to translate. But, basically, it starts with what we experience in our bodies today.

And it's then the sort of fully spirit-filled, empowered, resurrected body. Okay. Doesn't mean it's not really going to be a body at all. Now, how do we know this is going to happen?

Right. How can we be confident that God is actually going to give us a resurrection body? Well, one reason we can be confident is because Jesus Christ has already been resurrected. Right.

[7 : 48] And so, the New Testament says we can look back on what happened to Jesus 2,000 years ago and see a little picture of what he promises will happen to each of us who are united with him through faith.

So, Paul says we can have confidence that this is going to happen, even though we don't know exactly what it's going to look like, even though we can't imagine what it's going to be like. But we can look back and say, God raised Jesus from the dead.

And God promises that God will raise us from the dead, just as he raised Jesus from the dead 2,000 years ago. So, if you think about the resurrection body of Christ, it's, again, both, you know, a real physical body, right?

He eats food. He drinks, you know, he eats and drinks with his disciples. You know, he touches them. He has wounds. Interestingly, he still bears the scars of his crucifixion.

So, it's a real body. He says, I'm not just a ghost. I'm not just floating around here. You know, I'm not just appearing to you and then vanishing. Although, on the other hand, he does appear and then van, right?

[8 : 57] On the other hand, right, his body can go through. His body is not limited by all the things that limit our bodies now, right? He's able to go through the locked door and appear in the room.

And they're like, how did you get here? Right? Ah! You know, right? They're shocked. And then he's like, touch me. I'm real. Right?

So, you can't put it all together. Again, there's both continuity and discontinuity, right? There's something that's like, it's the same. It is, Christ was raised from the dead.

The same body that was crucified and laid in the tomb was raised from the dead. But, it's a new and resurrected and glorious body that isn't subject to the limitations that we currently experience.

So, Philippians says, the Lord Jesus Christ will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body. Again, our body is going to be made like his. And we have a glimpse of that now.

[10 : 02] And I think that this future hope of the resurrection of our bodies is one of the reasons, not the only reason, but one of the reasons why Paul encourages us and urges us over and over, offer your bodies to Jesus Christ as a living sacrifice day by day.

Because we are carrying around that seed that God one day is going to make into a glorious and beautiful tree that will bear fruit for eternity. Right?

You know, we're carrying around sort of the seed of that future resurrection body. And so, Paul's saying, let's live in light of what we're going to be in the future. What we're going to be eternally.

Right? Don't live in light of, you know, what God has saved you from. You know? Like, don't just keep dragging around all your sin and corruption with you. Right? Paul's like, leave that behind. Right?

Lean into the future. Live into what God is preparing you for. All right. Second point. In the beginning, God created us as gendered beings, male and female, in his image.

[11 : 02] Again, we said that nine weeks ago, the first week of the class. In the end, there's every indication that we will continue to bear God's image as male and female creatures, in our redeemed and glorified masculinity and femininity.

Now, Christ said, in Matthew 22, it also comes up in Mark and Luke, same passage, repeated in three gospels. He says, in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven.

And some Christians have heard that, and they have argued on the basis of that verse that when Jesus comes again, we will no longer be male and female at all. But that's not what Christ says.

And that's not what this passage is teaching. He simply says, we will not get married, and we'll get to that more on what that means in the third point. And even today, just because someone is not married does not mean that they are not male or female.

Right? It's actually really important. Like, you are fully male or female, whether you are married or not. Right? And we will be fully male and female in the new creation, regardless of marriage.

[12 : 18] So, there are several reasons, possibly, to believe that we'll continue to be male or female. Right? God made us from the beginning male and female. If God's intention was not going to be carried through into the age to come, presumably, Jesus would have indicated this.

There's no indication of any significant change in Christ's appearance in this regard after his resurrection. And, again, the idea of the bodily resurrection implies we'll retain some of our present human traits, and our maleness or femaleness is one of the most deeply rooted aspects of our present humanity.

So, even in the early church, this question came up, and I've included a quote from Jerome, who is an early church father, who affirms that we will be male and female in the age to come.

But I think, also, one thing we can look forward to is that our masculinity and femininity in the new creation will be purified from all distortions, healed from all wounds, and liberated from all false images.

Right? Often we have sort of false self-images, false images of what we should be, false images of what we are. Right? Just distorted self-concepts that are often sort of wounds that we carry with us.

[13 : 30] And God has promised, and often that's connected to being male or female in one respect or another. And God promises that he will free us from all those things. And we'll be able to receive and enjoy our resurrected bodies as true gifts from God in every respect.

So, I've included a quote that's a little hard to follow at times, but I'll read some of it. The glorification of the body will reveal the definitive meaning of what he's referring to.

It'll reveal the definitive meaning of how God made us in his image as male and female. Right? Our maleness and femaleness is meant to be a distinctive sign of the created person in the visible world, a means for communication between persons, an authentic expression of truth and love.

So, basically, we'll be freed to be all of who God has made us to be. And I think an interesting point in this regard is that the Bible uses both male and female imagery to describe our relationship to God, or describe us in relationship to God.

So, the church, both now and in the age to come, is described as the bride of Christ. And so, sort of corporately, we relate to Christ as a wife to a husband.

[14 : 55] But believers, now and eternally, are also called sons of God. Sometimes, in some translations, that's just translated children, because it does refer to both men and women. But it's using a male image from the ancient world, because the sons would receive the inheritance from their father.

And so, both of these are sort of images that help us understand who we are in Christ. So, I think what I want to say here is that both men and women, through Christ, can appreciate, and in one sense, even participate, sort of metaphorically, in the best of what both sexes embody.

Another way to put this is, if you think about the divine and human natures of Christ, right? Again, this is another one of these sort of mysterious and wonderful things, right? Jesus is both fully divine and fully human.

And those natures are not just sort of, like, confused with each other. But they're not divided and sort of kept separate from each other.

But no, they're distinct and yet united in his person. So, that's actually what an early church council called the Council of Chalcedon was trying to work out. And they said, they basically said, Jesus is fully divine and fully human.

[16 : 16] Sort of, yes, a divine nature and a human nature, but they're united in his one person. And I think that that's sort of a picture of humanity as a whole being male and female.

And sort of God's purpose that male and female are, we're able to sort of appreciate and enjoy all the gifts that God has given to us, right?

As a man, I can appreciate and for all eternity, I can appreciate and enjoy that God has made me male. And I can appreciate and enjoy what it means that God has made, you know, many of his children female.

And just the goodness of that, right? There's a harmony there. There's a unity, sort of distinctness and unity. We're united in fellowship through Christ. I think there's some mystery here, but I'm doing the best I can to sort of give, I think, what the Bible offers us as our future hope.

All right. Third point. Again, we've talked about our bodies, gender, sexuality. In the beginning, God created us as sexual beings and blessed the sexual union of husband and wife.

[17 : 21] In the end, our sexuality will be fulfilled when we, as the bride of Christ, enjoy unbroken face-to-face union with Christ. All right. Christ says in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage.

And I think those words are clear enough, though, you know, they sometimes sort of surprise us because sometimes we think of marriage as so integral to, we can idealize marriage and think of it as so important to, like, a happy, fulfilled Christian life.

Right? I really want to get married. That's sort of, like, central for many of us. But Christ says that, you know, marriage is a good gift in this life for many people, not for everyone, and sexual union within that context of marriage.

But in the new creation, marriage and sexual union will no longer be necessary for three primary reasons. First of all, procreation or bearing children will no longer be necessary.

That's one of the reasons why God gave marriage to the human race in the beginning, is for the raising of children. Right? So marriage should never be completely disconnected from that calling.

[18 : 38] But procreation will no longer be necessary because death will be no more, on the one hand, and because the fullness, what Paul calls the fullness of the Gentiles, the fullness of the nations, or what John in Revelation calls a great multitude that no one could number from all tribes and peoples and languages, will have been brought into God's eternal kingdom.

Right? In the beginning, God said, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, and that commission will have been fulfilled. And so the new creation will be full of people.

Right? It won't just be Adam and Eve at the beginning or a small group. It won't just be a tiny group of people in heaven looking around at each other and thinking, is there anything more than us?

Right? No. There's going to be a great multitude. Right? From every tribe and nation and tongue. And so the creation mandate will have been completed. And so that's one reason why marriage and sexual union will no longer be necessary.

The second reason is because the longing for intimacy that we pursue in marriage and that sort of draws us towards sexual union will be fulfilled in seeing our Savior himself face to face.

[19 : 49] And I think there's an analogy or sort of a parallel here. In the creation story, God put Adam into a deep sleep and he took out of his rib and fashioned it into his bride Eve.

And Adam wakes up from a deep sleep and he sees Eve and he explodes into poetry. And he says, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman for she was taken out of man.

And that word bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh is, it's basically like a marriage vow. And he's saying, we belong to each other.

God has put us together. We're as closely connected as the bone and flesh in my arm. And the only way we could be torn apart from each other would be very, very painful.

Right? That's sort of the image of what marriage is meant to be. That sort of deep union and close-knit union. So Adam rejoices upon awaking and seeing his bride face to face.

[20 : 58] But what do we have to look forward to? The Bible says that one day we will, Christ will awaken us. The dead will be raised.

He'll awaken us. And whose face will we see? We'll see the face of our bridegroom, of our husband. Right? The church, the bride, will see the face of Christ.

And we will be eternally satisfied in seeing him and dwelling with him forever and ever. That will be the fulfillment of our longings.

And that will be better. That will be all that the best of an earthly marriage can embody. And all that we long for and hope for in friendships and in family relationships fulfilled.

And truly we can look at Christ and say, he is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Right? He became fully human. Right? He's not just some other kind of being.

[22 : 00] He's our brother. He has become one with us. Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them. And they will be his people.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And death shall be no more. They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads. This will truly be the fulfillment of all our longings for intimacy, companionship, fruitfulness, faithfulness, and joy.

And it will never be taken away from us. Finally, the third thing I would say why marriage and sexual union will no longer be necessary in the new creation is because all of our human relationships in the new creation will be richer and deeper than they are today.

So you will not feel that you have lost something that you formerly had with your spouse in heaven. I think that's why we react negatively to Jesus' words is because we hear them and we think, we won't marry or be given in marriage?

Like, man, I'm going to lose like one of the best things I have if you have a good marriage. Right? Or if you're really longing to be married and really want to get married. Right? Right?

[23 : 07] So, but all of our human relationships with one another will be richer and deeper than they are today. On the one hand, we won't be, you know, on the one hand, we won't be as needy.

Right? Sometimes we long for relationships because we're, honestly, because we're idolatrously needy of other human beings. Right? And that's what's called codependence or whatever, obsessive.

Right? You know, we're looking for something in a human relationship that ultimately we're not going to find it because we're looking for God and we're looking at a person.

And it ain't Jesus. Jesus is the only person who gives us what God can offer. Right? So, we won't be as idolatrously needy of other human beings as we can sometimes be now.

On the other hand, we'll be ever more deeply connected to all of our brothers and sisters in Christ. And there won't be any of the hindrances. Think of all the things that hinder us from having unbroken fellowship with one another.

[24 : 12] Sometimes it's just geographical distance. Right? People live far away and, you know, or busyness. And so, we don't see each other.

But also, there's baggage from the past. There's conflicts. There's distrust. There's misunderstandings. There's all kinds of things that are ultimately a result of sin. And all those things will be removed.

None of those things will hinder us from that kind of close and unbroken fellowship with one another, with other human beings. We will certainly not feel that we have lost anything that we have previously enjoyed in an earthly marriage.

And those who have never married or who have never had sex while on earth will not feel that they have missed out on anything either. Right? Because we'll all have something far better. And every sacrifice made for Christ's sake will be honored and amply rewarded.

Jesus says, no one who leaves behind house or wife or fields or children. In other words, no one who forsakes marriage or children or leaves behind property or sort of gives away possessions for the sake of the kingdom of God.

[25 : 21] Right? If the path of faithfulness to Jesus for you means never getting married, never having sex, or giving away large amounts of your possessions, and being relatively poor compared to what you would be otherwise, or not enjoying, or whatever you have to give up in this life, Jesus promises it will be repaid.

And in fact, it will be more than repaid. Because God doesn't just repay. God generously gives. Right?

He even says a hundred times as much. God will make all things new, and there will be plenty of time to enjoy and explore his new creation and to plumb the depths of his infinite splendor, wisdom, and love.

So that's the future hope that we have. Let me open it up for some questions on this topic or any of the topics that we have covered in this class.

I know you probably can't answer this definitively, but some people have said that even though we won't be married or parents anymore, somehow we're going to know that you're going to be different than Peter and John.

[26 : 43] Do you think that's true? I think that we'll still be able to recognize each other. Right? Because that's part of, you know, God didn't make us clones.

Right? He didn't just make us on a machine. You know? It's not like, you know, a bunch of packages of Oreos in the store.

Right? All right, you're just one more package. Right? No. Like, God made us distinct and unique human beings. So I think we'll retain our sort of distinctive identities in some way or other.

Yes? But then other people say, if you have a child that is not a believer and yet there's no tears in heaven, the other argument is, no, you're not going to recognize one.

Because then if the other one's not there, then you'll know the other one's not there. And obviously as a parent you would feel sad, but you're not going to feel sad in heaven. So what about that argument? Yeah.

[27 : 37] So... Or your husband. Right. So I think one question is, what about loved ones who are not with Christ for eternity? Right. And I think some of us rightly ask, like, how could I fully rejoice with Christ for eternity if some of my loved ones are not with Christ for eternity?

Right. And I think that... I'd say a few things. One is, you know, you think about the Apostle Paul in Romans, and he says, I pray with tears for people who are living apart from Christ.

Right. Like, in this present age, it's right for us to pray and, you know, and be disturbed by the possibility that our loved ones could continue to live apart from Christ and spend eternity apart from Christ.

Right. So that's what motivates Paul to pray. That's what motivates Paul to go into all the world and share the gospel and invite people. That's what motivates Paul to persevere when people have, you know, treated him wrongly, but for the sake of that.

So I think that's... I think now, like, in this present age, right, we don't see the end. We, you know, we don't know who's, you know, who exactly is going to be there and who's actually not going to be there.

[29 : 07] Right. And honestly, even when people die, sometimes we're not totally sure. Right. We can't... You know, that only God ultimately knows.

Right. So I think, as for eternity, I think... I think we... I think I'd say two things. One is...

One is, I think we have to ask ourselves, like, you know, Jesus in some places is basically like, do you love me even more than your closest relatives?

Right. Right? And, you know, are we loyal to him, like, above all else? Um... And so, like, our greatest joy in heaven is not going to be a big family reunion.

Right? Our greatest joy in heaven is going to be being with the Lord and seeing him face to face. Right? He's the center of heaven. And if we had everything else in heaven, without him, it wouldn't be heaven. Right?

[30 : 11] And sometimes we have to ask ourselves, if I had everything else that God promises in heaven, you know, a new body and, you know, a new creation and a whole bunch of friends, um, but I didn't have Jesus, would I be happy to be there?

And if we think, sure, I'd be happy to be there, then the question is, do I really love the Lord? Or do I just want some of the benefits?

Right? Um, the other thing is, uh, the picture of hell that the Bible gives us is that we become less human and not more.

Like, we lose the good aspects of our humanity. Right? There are many things. So, Jesus says, when people are on earth, God sustains the righteous and the unrighteous.

Right? And, you know, he gives health, physical health, and he gives wisdom and mental stability. And, right, God gives all kinds of sort of common grace blessings, even to people who reject him and don't recognize them as coming from him.

[31 : 14] But hell is a place where, or eternity basically means we either recognize the source of all those blessings and cling to the source, that is God and Christ, and we experience those, you know, life in union with God for all eternity, or we are sort of left to ourselves.

Right? And all those other blessings are removed. Right? And so, all the things that, all the things that would have attracted us to even loved ones on earth will not be there in hell.

Right? Right? That, like, being in hell and looking at someone else, you won't see any of those attractive things, because those were gifts of God that God gave to them while they were on earth.

And by rejecting, by finally rejecting Christ and persisting in that unrepentance, God will take, God will remove those, because those are temporary blessings for earthly life.

And so there won't be anything left that, if you think of all the things that would make someone admirable and make you want to spend a lot of time with them, none of those will be there.

[32 : 25] And only sin and sort of corruption will be there. And that's a scary picture. Right? Right?

Right? That's also a motivation to, like, repent and turn to Christ today, because you don't want to become like that. Right? Like, you know, we don't want to have all of the good things in our life that God has just graciously given to us, taken away, because we haven't truly turned to Christ.

So if you haven't turned to Christ, turn to Christ. Right? Because then all the good things that he's given us on earth are sort of only a prelude to what we'll have in all eternity.

Right? They're only the beginning instead of sort of the end. But that's a hard question. And I think, yeah, it's a good question to ask.

Michelle? So I guess I have a question about, so I think one of the joys of heaven will be that we will finally see the effects of sin in our lives and corruption of the sin in our lives.

[33 : 34] You know, and we'll be like, oh, wow, I had no idea sin had, you know, dampened my emotions, dampened my physical abilities. You know, I think we're going to wake up and go, whoa.

Like, sin was really powerful, and it had super effect on our lives in a way we can't come to it now. Because I feel like we don't have the full picture of the garden. Like, how did Adam run in the garden?

You know what I mean? Like, we have no idea what his physical capabilities were. Yeah. And they're so degraded at this point. And you can go through every aspect of our lives. So in some ways, I think heaven is difficult to understand because we don't understand how it was in the garden.

Yeah. Because the picture's not fully there. Yeah. But I can also see that it's difficult because the picture's not really there of heaven to say, well, my hope is in what is to come. Because it's not, like, the Bible doesn't really flush it all out.

So I wondered if you had some pastoral encouragement. Like, how do you hope in something that is just so intangible? Yeah. Both looking back at the garden, but also looking forward to the new garden.

[34 : 37] Yeah. Yeah, that's a great question. How do we, right, how do we sort of fix our hopes on, you know, Paul says fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, for what is unseen is eternal.

But it's unseen. Like, how do I fix my eyes on what I can't see? I think one of the ways that God has given to us to do that is he gives us foretastes of heaven in our lives today.

And maybe it's, you know, sometimes, like, when we're, like, singing a great hymn together upstairs and we can sort of hear everybody singing.

If you sit toward the front, you can hear the congregation singing, right? If you always sit in the back, you won't hear it as much. But one of the benefits of sitting toward the front is you actually hear everybody else behind you, and it's sort of cool. And, but anyway, right, sometimes there's these, there's these experiences that we have of, like, where we're just like, man, it's awesome to worship God.

Or I love just being in nature and seeing God's creation. So, like, I don't do a lot of mountain hiking, but I love doing it when I have the opportunity to do that.

[35 : 49] When our children get a little older, hopefully we'll do a little more. If you're able to. If I'm able, yeah. Hopefully my body lasts that long. But, right, when you get to the top of the mountain, right, like, you can sort, when you sort of see one of those, like, when you emerge from the trees and you, like, see the view, right?

Right. Or I think, like, sometimes just, like, having a good meal with a group of friends and having a good conversation for, you know, for an hour or two or a couple of hours late into the evening.

Like, that's, you know, for me, those are some of the things that I'm like, those are all little pictures of what we can experience in eternity to come. So, I think when we, I think one thing we can do is sort of recognize those four tastes of heaven.

And, you know, those first fruits of the Holy Spirit, you know, when we have this sense of sort of nearness to God in prayer or whatever it might be, you know, and different ones of us might experience it in different ways.

But to sort of hold on to those things, not hold on to those things and be like, oh, I don't ever want to lose this, you know. I mean, that's not right. Like, that's sort of like somebody who's, like, walks up the mountain and they're, like, constantly, like, taking pictures.

[37 : 10] Right? And, like, they're only looking through their phone. Like, okay, I've got to get a picture of everything. Got to get a picture of everything. And you can't even, like, enjoy the experience because you're, like, so fixated on getting pictures which are not going to be nearly as good as the experience itself.

Right? But I think it's, I think what the Bible is saying is, like, see through the experience to the eternal hope. Right? To the source and the, right, the, where it points us towards.

So that's one thing. I think the other thing is, like, in our longing, is when we're on the other end of life, in the adversities and the unfulfilled longings, is those can be times where we can say, Lord, I'm thankful that I have more than this to live for.

Like, help me to remember that I really do. Like, help me to know that, help me to know that, you know, when I'm barely dragging myself out of bed this morning, that there's something better ahead.

And even if I can't see what it is, help me to keep plodding along through the wilderness to get there. Along those lines, if I can make a point, you know, we are thinking about all this with our human mind.

[38 : 20] So, you know, when we say we can't understand the mind of God, we really can't. You know, if we think about just the perfect union between us and God in heaven, you know, when we talk about giving up the marriage, you know, or our children, the relationship, because that's the best of what we can muster up here in a sinful world.

Right? So when that sin is gone, and now you're in perfect union with God, if we can get out of our own way and get out without sin, it's a whole new ballgame. And you're with God.

I mean, it's this... Yeah. I don't need anything more than that. Just the thought of that is enough. Yeah. Yeah. That's right. Kelly.

Yeah. Talking about looking forward to heaven and Christ being the ultimate reward, how then do we talk about rewards in heaven? That's always been... What does that mean exactly?

I feel like my tradition that comes from never really emphasized that, because we wanted Christ to be everything in heaven, so we're not going to talk about... So can you speak a little bit just about rewards and how to think about that well? Yeah.

[39 : 23] With sacrifice on earth and that kind of thing? Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I think Jesus does promise. You know, Revelation has a picture of, like, the crown that's given to the martyrs.

It's a picture of, like... They're often pictures of sort of reversal, right? Like, people who experience shame in this life because of Christ can look forward to receiving honor from Christ in the life to come.

Right? People who experienced sort of deprivation for the sake of Christ can look forward to experiencing fullness and plenty in the life to come. So, again, I think it's meant to sort of remind us in our lowest, hardest circumstances on earth, like, there's, you know, there's a promise of something better to come.

You know, again, like, what are those rewards going to look like? I'm not sure we can... I'm not sure... You know, sometimes people have been, like, oh, you're going to rule... Sometimes people have taken some of the language of the parables literally and they're, like, you're going to rule over ten cities in the, you know, age to come if you are faithful with, like, using your money well on earth.

And I'm, like, it's a parable. Like, you know, like... And, like, some of us, like, ruling over ten cities, oh, gosh, please, no. Like, right?

[40 : 43] But, again, that's our fallen world experience. So, the other thing that was helpful to me is a long time ago, John Hinkson said to me, you know, different people will get different rewards in heaven, but the people who get the most rewards will all be the most generous and they'll want to share their rewards with everybody else.

And so there won't ever be any envy because all of us will be, like... Because envy is a sin. You know, there won't be envy. There won't be, like, oh, I've got to keep my reward to myself. Oh, he's got a bigger reward than I...

John's like, but... Aren't the most godly people, like, the ones who are, like, all mine is yours because we belong to Christ? Like, so that helped me, like, because that sort of solves the problem of, like, different rewards and, like, you know, am I going to be living in, you know, or whatever.

Somebody's going to be living in a mansion and I'll be living in a shack in heaven and I'll be glad to be in my shack in heaven. Like, you know, like, that's, again, like, we got to be, we have to also just remember when we're, like, projecting our present experience onto heaven.

Like, when we have disappointing pictures of heaven, it's because we're projecting our present experience onto heaven, not because heaven will be disappointing or boring or anything like that.

[41 : 59] Yeah. I don't know if I answered your question, but that's the best idea. Oh, we do. It's funny that you mentioned John because I, in Jess two weeks ago, I said to him, I said, do I get the jewels in my crown?

And he said, because you asked, you're not going to get it. Be careful what you asked for. And I, like, struck me, you know, we say, Jess, like you said, you know, we kind of take these things out of context and the mansion on the hill.

Well, what part of the mansion am I going to live in? When the expectation should be being there with Jesus, with the Lord. Yeah. Yeah. And really, I'd be happy with the shack.

You know, I mean, that's the goal is to be there, not the things that we think of here on earth as being a measure of that reward or something that we deserve.

And, you know, it's a nice refresher of being childlike again, that anticipation on a birthday. Yeah. Because you knew you got a birthday gift last year. You anticipate when somebody says, you don't know what's coming, you can't see it, but you get excited.

[43 : 05] Because there is that foretaste of, I got a birthday gift that I really enjoyed. How much greater will it be when we meet the Lord? Yeah. It's just nothing we can even comprehend at this point.

Right. But we can get excited for it. Yeah, that's right. No, that's right. That's right. And I think that's why there are those metaphors in the Bible, in the parables and in Revelation.

I mean, in Revelation, there's all these metaphors of jewels. Like, no, I'm not into jewels. Like, okay? Like, you know, that ain't my thing.

Like, I love my wife and I love the fact that she doesn't wear tons and tons of jewels. Anyway. But what are the jewels?

Right? They're, you know, you think in the ancient world, they're representations of, like, majesty and glory. Right? Those were people who were, like, sort of honored in that society.

[44 : 07] Right? So, like, why are all the jewels on the walls of heaven? It's like, this is the most glorious place. Right? Nothing will be missing there. Right?

There won't be any drudgery there. Right? You know, we'll all be able to experience that. Right? We'll, right? That sort of... Anyway, I mean, I think there's different images, like, different ones of us will connect with more readily than others.

But I think saying, like, okay, what's the image talking about? And, like, how do we... You know, I think the images are there to help us have something to hold on to that connects to our present experience.

You know, like, all the images of, like, eating a meal together. Right? Okay, I connect more with that. Right? Like, a good meal with good people, good friends. Like, there we go. You know?

Like, you know, but again, like, each of the images point forward towards something. You know, and again, like, some people might be like, yes, like, I really, like, appreciate the exquisiteness of a diamond.

[45 : 08] Like, yeah, it actually is really exquisite. Like, you know, and different jewels. Like, yes, like, they are really beautiful. Like, and there's something about that that points forward to heaven.

Anyway, so different things all point forward to that. Let me... Dean, yes. I got a question. I mean, when we pray in the church and learn that you follow this path, we follow the questions.

How do you think the emphasis should be on what you're treating on? Emphasis on what's to come or your relationship with God right now? Yeah. Which is more important?

I think that's a great question. I think that our hope for what's to come is supposed to be something that sustains and anchors us and helps us stay focused in the present.

I mean, obviously, I think we can... I think it's a mistake if we only think about what's to come and then, like, walk through the world and sort of, like, are sort of, like... Like, I mean, there's a phrase, like, some Christians are so heavenly-minded they're no earthly good.

[46 : 18] Like, okay, I can see that. Some Christians are so earthly-minded that they have no hope beyond this life. And they, you know, so they're not able to see things in God's perspective because they're only thinking about the present.

But I think, like, our hope for the future is supposed to be what sort of... One of the things that sort of guides us to look to Christ in the present.

You know, it's sort of like... It's sort of like when you're going on a long trip. You've got to keep your destination in mind.

But you've also got to keep your eyes on the road right in front of you. So, maybe that's the simplest way to summarize it. Right? Remember where we're going.

But also keep your eyes on the next thing God's put in front of us. All right. Let me close this in prayer. I sort of put a closing section of prayer for all the topics that we covered in this class.

[47 : 27] Feel free to... We won't go through all that in detail. But let me just... Let me just pray. So, I'm going to begin with one of these traditional prayers for Sunday in Advent.

And then I'm going to pray for some of the topics in this class. And then we'll conclude with another prayer. But these are prayers that sort of encourage us to live in light of the future and live in the present.

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Now, in the time of this mortal life in which your Son, Jesus Christ, came to visit us in great humility, that in the last day when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to life immortal through him who lives and reigns with you in the Holy Spirit as one God now and forever.

Lord, we thank you for all the topics we've covered in this class. We thank you for your wisdom and care in creating our bodies and fashioning us male and female in your image. Thank you even for our sexual longings that ultimately reveal our need and desire for you alone.

We pray for marriages in the church that they would be strengthened by your Spirit's power and by the love of Christ. Lord, that we would see Christ in one another through Christian marriages and non-believers would see the power of Christ at work.

[48 : 52] We pray you'd strengthen struggling marriages through the practice of ongoing daily repentance and forgiveness. And we pray for single people in the church that they would flourish in friendship, in community, in prayer, in godliness, that they would receive their singleness as an honorable calling, that they would resist worldly pressures, that they'd bear witness to Christ's efficiency.

We pray for people in the church who experience same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria. We pray that they would seek and find their identity in Christ and live according to your design. We pray that in surrendering their weakness to you, that they would experience your power for ministry to others.

And that they would find wise and loving Christian brothers and sisters who are committed to walking alongside them. We pray for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer community outside the church.

We pray for the church to have courage and wisdom and love and endurance in extending hospitality and in walking in distinctive holiness. And we pray that many people would come to know Christ from these communities as Savior and Lord and surrender their entire selves to him.

We pray for those affected by the sin of pornography, that those who are hiding their sin would be exposed and led to repentance for those who are struggling, that they would have strength not just to resist temptation but to pursue Christ in new and deeper ways.

[50 : 07] And we pray for those involved in the production of pornography to be rescued from its deceit and corruption. We pray for those affected by sexual assault and abuse, for perpetrators to be held to account and led to repentance and prevented from harming others, for victims to engage with anger and grief and to draw near to Christ as their merciful and faithful high priest to find healing and sustaining hope.

Pray for the church to care well for survivors of abuse and be faithful to prevent further sexual misconduct. And for all of us, we pray that we may look forward to Christ's return with patient anticipation and hopeful endurance.

Let's conclude by saying this last prayer together at the bottom of the page. O God, who wonderfully created and yet more wonderfully restored the dignity of human nature, grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.