

# The Resurrection and the Life

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[ 0 : 00 ]      ran a story about how some people try to live forever. And they rely on a pseudoscience called cryonics, which is a practice of preserving corpses at an extremely low temperature with the hope that future medical advances, scientific advances, would enable people to resuscitate them if they preserve the body.

Now, despite the fact that the scientific community generally frowns on this practice, 200 people so far are stored in liquid nitrogen, and at least 2,000 more are signed up to be frozen after their death in the U.S.

It's a growing business. And this kind of reminds us, right, even though death is really universal, and we've experienced it for generation after generation after generation, it still strikes us as something that's strangely abnormal.

It feels unnatural for someone to die. It feels like an interruption to life. And perhaps that's why humanity has marshaled its greatest ingenuity and resourcefulness to defy death and at least to delay death.

We have fought against death throughout all of humanity's history. And in a letter that he wrote, C.S. Lewis, to his friend Sheldon Vonneken, an American author, he writes about this phenomenon.

[ 1 : 21 ]      He says, A wish may lead to false beliefs, granted. But what does the existence of the wish suggest? At one time, I was much impressed by Arnold's line, nor does the being hungry prove that we have bread.

But surely, though it doesn't prove that one particular man will get food, it does prove that there is such a thing as food. If we were a species that didn't normally eat, weren't designed to eat, would we feel hungry?

Do fish complain of the sea for being wet? Or if they did, would that fact itself not strongly suggest that they had not always been or would not always be purely aquatic creatures?

Notice how we are perpetually surprised at time. How time flies. Fancy John being grown up and married. I can hardly believe it. In heaven's name, why?

Unless, indeed, there is something in us which is not temporal. In this passage, we're confronted with the reality of death, but it points us beyond death to an even greater reality, namely that Jesus is the resurrection and the life who reveals God's glory to those whom he loves.

[ 2 : 36 ]      And this passage shows us three things in which God reveals his glory. First is our suffering and death. Second is our resurrection and life. And third, it's Christ's death and resurrection.

These three things reveal God's glory. Because we're surprised by time, we're surprised by death, because we weren't meant to die.

We were created for eternity, as Ecclesiastes 3.11 notes. Now read verses 1 to 4 with me. It sets the scene for our story here. 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, for it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it. So John tells us that Lazarus was the brother of Mary who anointed Jesus' feet with oil.

[ 3 : 41 ] And this story, actually, John hasn't told us yet. We're going to hear about it in the following chapters. So it shows the fact that he mentions this as a reference, shows that people probably knew about this before John told the story, probably from the Gospel of Luke, because it's recorded there also in chapter 10.

Now, so Lazarus was ill, and it seems that the family was very close to Jesus, because the sister sent for him and write, Lord, in verse 3, He whom you love is ill.

And I don't think that means, you know, just that Jesus loves everyone, so they're referring to him as he whom he loves. No, they seem to think that Jesus has a special affection for him and his family. And so, right when he hears this in verse 4, he says that Jesus promises, 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. And, of course, having the benefit of hindsight, we know what Jesus means, because Lazarus does, in fact, die.

That's not what Jesus means, that it will not end in death. But he means that it will not ultimately end in death, because he's going to be raised again. And now, in the Gospel of John, the word glory is significant, and it doesn't primarily refer, in the Gospel of John, to something that we bestow on God, the praise or glory that we give to God, but rather to the glory that emanates from God, that emanates from God, that's his, rightfully his.

[ 5 : 06 ] So when Jesus says that it is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it, he's saying that Lazarus' illness is going to lead to the revelation of the glory of the Son of God.

It's going to reveal God's glory. Now, this knowledge that Jesus has leads to something quite strange in verses 5 and 6. Please follow along with me.

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.

Now, notice the repetition of the word love, right? They wrote to him saying, the one whom you love is ill, and now Jesus confirms, John the narrator confirms it. Now, Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus.

So, Jesus loves them. And now, from that verse alone, you would think that what follows immediately after that sentence would be, well, Jesus loved them, so he got up immediately and left for Bethany.

[ 6 : 06 ] That's what you would expect to see. But you see exactly the opposite. It says in verse 6, So, that's therefore, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

This is curious indeed, right? Lazarus is deathly ill, and Jesus, knowing this supernaturally, decides to delay his coming. And as soon as he finds that Lazarus is dead, it almost functions like a divine signal for him.

He says, okay, now let's go. What's going on? And it may have been related to the fact that there was a Jewish superstition in those days that said that a soul of the deceased hovered over the dead, over the corpse basically for three days.

And during those three days, would hover over the diseased corpse and try to reenter that body. But around the fourth day, when decomposition kicks in and the body starts to rot, it would abandon all hope and leave.

So that was a superstition that was around at the time among the Jewish people. And so that may be why John specifically notes in verse 17 that when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days after that time.

[ 7 : 20 ] So Jesus seems to be intentionally delaying his coming to make sure that Lazarus is good and dead and to make sure that everybody, no one's going to have a mistake in their mind that Lazarus is actually dead and he's never coming back to life.

And so he's, which is still baffling to us, right? It's baffling to everyone around him as well because Lazarus is ill and he loves him.

Why not go and heal him right away? And you see this doubt expressed throughout this passage. In verse 21, when Martha meets Jesus, she says, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Where have you been, Jesus? Our courier returned several days ago and reported that he relayed the message to you in a timely fashion. Where have you been? You could have prevented this.

Do you not care? And Mary echoes those sentiments in verse 32. Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. And the watching crowd also says the same thing in verse 37, could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?

[ 8 : 29 ] And the answer, of course, is yes. He could have. But he didn't. And that's ultimately the question we ask in our suffering as well, isn't it?

When we're suffering, when we're going through difficulties, this is the question we ask. God, you are sovereign and all-powerful. Couldn't you have prevented this? If you had been here, Jesus, my mother would not have died of cancer.

If you had been here, Jesus, my brother would not have died of drug overdose. If you had been here, Jesus, I would not still be a lonely single when I desperately want a spouse.

If you had been here, Jesus, I would not still be barren and infertile. If you had been here, Jesus, I would be working a different job. I'd be in a different place in my career.

If only you had been here, Jesus. And note that at this point of the passage, we don't know yet that Jesus is going to raise Lazarus from the dead.

[ 9 : 35 ] And so as Martha, Mary, and the onlookers are mourning Lazarus' death, Jesus' delay is totally unexplainable. You can't understand that. Because they did not understand that Jesus intended to raise them from the dead and so doing, build up their faith and reveal God's glory.

And that, in the end, revealing God's glory is the best thing He can do for us. It's the most good thing He can do for us because God Himself is love. God Himself is life.

Life itself resides in Him. And so getting a glimpse of Him and His glory and partaking in that glory, that's the best thing, very best thing that God can do for us. And that's what Jesus wants, the very best for Mary and Martha and Lazarus.

That's why the Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches that man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. To glorify God is to enjoy Him and to enjoy Him is to glorify Him.

And this, you have to note that it doesn't mean what's good for us is necessarily painless. A trip to the dentist should be enough to convince us of that.

[ 10 : 46 ] What's good for us is not necessarily painless. But God always promises, God promises always to act for His glory and our good. And in a letter to his friend, once again, it's a different letter that C.S. Lewis wrote, and he's writing about his wife, Joy Davidman's cancer and what that might have in store for them.

And he writes, We are not necessarily doubting that God will do the best for us. We are wondering how painful the best will turn out to be. What is best for you, what is good for you, might be extraordinarily painful as it was for Lazarus, as it was for Martha and Mary.

And you might not know how your story is going to end, but you can be assured that it is for the glory of God, which is for your good.

In all the suffering of those who trust in Jesus, there is glory in the end, and your suffering is not meaningless. It may seem meaningless to you because you can't connect, you don't see the full picture, right?

If you purchase the puzzle from Toys R Us and you come home and let's say it has two pieces that don't fit. And if that was, if it only had two pieces and the two pieces didn't fit, well, you'd have the right to go back and complain and say this was a defective product, give me a new puzzle, right?

[ 12 : 17 ] But what if that two piece of puzzle that don't fit is part of a thousand piece puzzle and you just don't have those pieces? Well, then they would say you're crazy to come try to return that.

You just don't, you just haven't figured out yet how it fits, right? In the same way, we might not know how the story ends. We might not know how this will be for God's glory and for our good, but God sees the whole picture.

And so in spite of the uncertainty, we can trust in Him and that this contradiction in our life will find its reconciliation in the transcendent mind of God. And our suffering and even death, it's for our glory and good, but there's one more thing that God offers us, that Jesus offers us to help us in the midst of our pain and suffering.

And that's the assurance of God's love. Because remember verse five, 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.

It was not indifference or callousness or selfishness that motivated Jesus to delay. It was His love for Lazarus and Martha and Mary that motivated Jesus to let them suffer and grieve for a time.

[ 13 : 36 ] Remembering God's love in the midst of our suffering provides much comfort for us because you know that love does no harm. Love does no wrong. And God loves us.

His love lies behind every trial, every travail we experience. And not only that, Jesus, the Son of God, empathizes with us in the suffering.

Verse 33, it says, 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 the same word, deeply moved, is used again in verse 38. Now, a slight tweak of how you might understand that because the phrase deeply moved is a translation of one Greek word that denotes emotional outrage and indignation.

So that's a New Living Translation actually I think gets this right, which is rare for it to get it right better than the ESV. It says here, When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within Him and He was deeply troubled.

[ 14 : 45 ] Because the same word is used only three other times in the entire New Testament and in all three of those instances it refers to Jesus sternly rebuking or warning someone. It refers to His indignation, anger.

And in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, Psalm 711, Lamentations 2.6, the word is used to refer to God's fierce indignation in judgment. So it's tempting if you're a translator to read this and try to sanitize the word because I mean who doesn't want to think about Jesus being deeply moved as He sees our suffering.

But that's not exactly what's going on. Jesus is deeply moved indeed but it's an indignation at something. But at what exactly? It says that Jesus became indignant when He saw the people weeping.

And I think the connection might be that Son of God, as John tells us in another one of His writings, in 1 John 3.8, the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. Jesus came to destroy, to defeat sin and death.

And Jesus is angered by the sight of death, consuming and grieving the people He loves and the sin that caused it. Jesus is angry that the precious people who were created through Him, who were intended for eternity and life with Him, are now marred by sin and death.

[ 16 : 04 ] So as our champion against sin and death, Jesus' anger swells up in Him as He sees this, as He prepares to rescue Lazarus from the jaws of death, He's indignant.

So Jesus is angry at sin and death, but He's also compassionate toward those who are weeping. Where do we get that? Look at verse 35, the shortest verse in the Bible, Jesus wept.

It's short, but it packs a punch, doesn't it? He sorrows, He feels our suffering. He's not a stoic God indifferent to the sufferings of mere mortals sheltered in some Mount Olympus, untouched by the earthly realities.

No, Jesus is the God who came down to earth. Jesus is the God who became man. Jesus is the one who is able to empathize with us in our weaknesses. As Isaiah 53 prophesied, Jesus would be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Jesus identified with the frailty of humanity because He loved us.

[ 17 : 23 ] And so He wept. And the Jews, seeing Him weep, say in verse 36, see how He loved them. So next time you're grieving, maybe you're grieving now, you're filled with sorrow, remember that Jesus wept and He weeps with you.

Behind every Christian suffering is God's love and at the end of every Christian suffering is God's glory. And that removes the sting of bitterness from any suffering for the Christian.

So God's glory is revealed even through our suffering and death. And secondly, God reveals His glory in the eternal life and resurrection that He offers us.

So after Lazarus dies, Jesus leads His disciples back to Bethany in Judea. And when Martha sees Him, she says to Him, verses 21 to 22, 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. Now, we can mistakenly think that Martha's saying, well, even now, God will give you whatever you ask means that she has faith that Jesus is going to raise Him from the dead.

[ 18 : 40 ] But I don't think that's what's going on because if you look at her obtuseness in verse 24 and her unbelief in verse 39 that shows that, no, she didn't have that faith at all. So that's not what she's saying, but she's rather just expressing a general vote of confidence.

Lord, you missed this one. You didn't get here on time. But, you know, I still believe that you have a special access to God. So that's kind of a general thing that Martha is saying to her. And so Jesus responds to her in verse 23, your brother will rise again.

That's a wonderfully ambiguous statement, right? Because they believe in the resurrection of the dead at the end of time. It has a double meaning. So on the one hand, Lazarus will rise again on the last day and that's how Martha understands him.

But Jesus means more than that, right? He will rise again here and now. So Jesus corrects her in verses 25 and 26. 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. Jesus redirects Martha from an abstract faith in the resurrection at the end times to a personal faith in Jesus as the resurrection and the life.

[ 19 : 59 ] And Jesus seems to be referring to two different things here. The future bodily resurrection of believers, right? And also the present spiritual life, eternal life that God offers us.

And I think that's what it means when he says, whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. So that's a reference to the final resurrection, the resurrection of the body.

We will die. We will all eventually die. But we will yet live. We'll live again. We'll be raised to life. And then I think the second half of Jesus' statement is where Jesus talks about eternal life here and now.

Because he says, everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. So of course, those two things can't be referring to the same death. Because on the one hand, he said that you will die and yet you will live.

But on the other hand, he says you will never die. So they're not referring to the same kind of death. The second kind of death he's referring to is spiritual death that we are all born into. And he's saying that if you believe in me, you will live and you will never die.

[ 21 : 00 ] Now, so if we, this is such an important truth and I want us to really get the joy and the hope that lies in our resurrection and eternal life.

And I want you to appreciate this rightly. So let's talk first about eternal life, what that means for us, the life that Jesus promises. Because sometimes people think about eternal life in heaven and they think of these embodied spirits floating around in heaven and playing harps and that's kind of what they think of heaven, right?

And that's not very appealing for a lot of people. And that's, but don't think about eternal life that way. I want you to think about eternal life this way, right? What's the most precious thing that this life offers?

What's the most beautiful thing that you see in this life, right? It's love, right? That's why people sing about it. That's why people make movies about it, right? And it's, and imagine maybe the unbreakable bond of parental love or maybe that intimate commitment of romantic love, right?

Well, scripture teaches us God is love, right? He's the one that defines love and he is the light of the world as John told us. He, God is life. And so eternal life, which as Christians we begin to experience here and now, is nothing less than perfect communion with God, union with Christ and fellowship with the triune God.

[ 22 : 20 ] So, and a Christian, of course, is by definition someone who loves God because they have been loved by God. And if that's you, then there's nothing more ecstatic, delightful, and joyful, and rapturous than enjoying communion, union with God, right?

who loves us perfectly, supremely. That's eternal life. There's nothing better than that. And that's not the end of it.

That's the other part, resurrection life. Because the resurrection still awaits us after we die. Jesus will return to earth once more and when he does, he will consummate his kingdom here on earth and our bodies will be raised, resurrected, and perfected.

heaven up there, so to speak, is not the final destination. It's a layover. The final heaven is here. As Revelation 21, 3 prophesies, behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God. The ultimate heaven is not us with God over there, but God with us.

[ 23 : 36 ] Heaven will come down and we will have heaven on earth. And Paul writes about this in 1 Corinthians 15, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed.

For this perishable body must put on the imperishable and this mortal body must put on immortality. Our perishable bodies will be raised imperishable. Our dishonorable bodies will be raised honorable.

Our inglorious bodies will be raised glorious. Our weak bodies will be raised in power. All our infirmities and imperfections that we experience in this life will be gone.

Right? Just think about that and the implication of the resurrection of the body also is the renewal of the entire creation, of course, as Romans 8, 21 and 23 suggest.

So think about that for a moment. That means, personally, my mother, who has debilitating chronic arthritis, will be able to use her hands again and be able to run again.

[ 24 : 41 ] Right? That means the blind people who never got to see and behold the beauties of this colorful world, the Grand Canyon, Van Gogh's painting, the flowers, human beings, they will see again.

and it will be infinitely more beautiful than the world that he missed. That means the deaf who never got to relish Mozart's unforgettable melodies, never got to hear the chirping of birds in the morning or the waves crashing over the rocks, they will hear again.

That means the anosmic who is not able to smell the pleasing aroma of roasting coffee beans, or fresh baked bread coming out of the oven, they will smell things that they could never imagine.

People inflicted with agusia can't taste anything. They have not tasted the salty unami of chicken noodle soup or that bittersweetness of chocolate.

They will taste truly heavenly food. And even for those of us who don't have any physical disabilities, I mean, I'm speculating here, but we only see a spectrum, like limited range of things that other creatures hear and see, right?

[ 26 : 03 ] I wonder whether we'll see all of that. Can you imagine the beauties that lie behind the possibilities? You see, the resurrection of the body and heaven coming down to earth means that we can have hope even when we have the most dull and boring life right now, even when those of us who maybe some of you have never left your hometown, you've always been here, you've never seen the world.

Even for those of you, those people in other parts of the world that live in war-torn regions where they're persecuted for their faith, all of us are going to live again. And that time and that life, we're going to have eternity to enjoy and to bask in everything glorious that God has created.

It's going to be new. And this resurrection also imbues everything we do with such meaning and infinite worth, doesn't it?

Right? Because if heaven is going to invade the earth, then what we do on earth matters. Right? This life is not the end, it's practice, it's like rehearsal for that next life, that is coming.

It prepares us for a resurrection life. So whether your job is to translate languages or to create softwares or to raise kids or to sell products or to clean streets and houses, you're enhancing the beauties and glories of this earth and you're adding to the culture of humanity and you're improving the lot of humanity and your work, everything that you, every sweat, every day that you shed, everything you expend for God's glory will come to full fruition in that life.

[ 27 : 46 ] Nothing you do for the Lord will be wasted. And we'll have eternity to make friendships, realize our dreams. That's why I think the bucket list mentality doesn't make any sense for the Christian.

Right? That makes sense if this is all we have. But no, we're going to have this life again and it's going to be better. Eternity to discover new things about God's world and about God to get to know people, love people, to enjoy all that is true, noble, beautiful, lovely, good, and excellent.

Heaven on earth is going to be awesome. And I hope it captures your imagination because that's going to change how you live.

So Jesus is here making an amazing promise. He's the resurrection and the life. And then Jesus, to prove this audacious claim, raises Lazarus from the dead.

Verse 39, He says, take away the stone. But Martha objects and you see here her unbelief. Lord, sorry to break this to you, but by this time there will be an order for he has been dead four days.

[ 29 : 07 ] And Jesus admonishes her in verse 40, did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?

And then he prays a prayer of thanksgiving to his father and he bellows out, he says in a loud voice, Lazarus, come out. And incredibly, even the dead body recognizes the voice of its creator, the author of life, and it springs back to life.

And in verse 44, he says, the man who had died, remember, notice how it doesn't say Lazarus, it says the sister of the dead man, because to emphasize that he was really dead, he says again, the man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips and his face wrapped with a cloth.

And you can still visit his tomb in the West Bank. The Palestinian territory within Israel, the town has now been renamed by the Muslims who lived there as Al-Azaria after Lazarus.

God reveals the glory of the Son of God through our suffering and death and also through our resurrection and life. And then finally, also in Jesus' death and resurrection.

[ 30 : 22 ] Because, you see, what Jesus is doing here presents a big, seemingly insurmountable theological problem. because Romans 6.23 teaches that the wages of sin is death.

That's the proper wage of sin. It is death. And Lazarus is a sinner. And we're all sinners. Then how can Jesus offer us resurrection and the life?

What we deserve is death. That's the proper wage of sin. How can God, who is the righteous judge and ruler, let the wicked roam free? Imagine a drunk driver rams into your parked car.

He could feel really sorry, but that doesn't really make up for it, does it? He could go to court and the judge might unexplainably pardon him, but that still doesn't make up for it, does it?

Somebody has to pay the cost. It's either going to be him or you're going to have to absorb the cost of the damages. Who is going to absorb the cost of sin?

[ 31 : 31 ] It's death. Who is going to absorb that? And we see hints of this throughout the passage. Now backtrack with me for a moment to verses 9 and 10 because when Jesus tells his disciples that they're going back to Judea and they object and sensibly they object to this saying, look, do you not remember they were just trying to kill you right there?

So what do you mean let's go back to Judea? And Jesus says this, are there not 12 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. So walking in the day represents the time when Jesus is with his disciples because he's the light of the world.



But his mention of the night when the light is not with them suggests a night that is coming. And in fact it is coming very soon and this night represents the time in the absence of the light of the world the intervening time between Jesus' ascension and the Holy Spirit's descent.

That time that period that the ministry does not go forward. And then so Jesus says that the night is Jesus hints that the night is coming and it's coming very soon because this is the last and climactic miracle that Jesus performs before his death.

[ 32 : 46 ] And so Thomas speaks better than he knows when he says in verse 16 let us also go that we may die with him. Jesus is going to die. And the presence of many Jews right in verses 18 to 9 he said that there were many Jews there mourning the death of Lazarus.

Right? And that's also alarming and it points to what's going to happen later because Jesus is going to become so popular after this and so many people are going to be following and believing him.

This last miracle becomes and the witnessing of the many Jews that were there is going to become the last straw that breaks the camel's back. It's going to finally bring the Jewish leaders' patience to its end and they're going to deliberately start to plan to kill Jesus after this.

So all of these are pointing and finally this final sign is in verse 33 because it tells us not only that Jesus was indignant in his spirit it also says that he was greatly troubled and that's the word that's used later in 1227 and 1321 to say that Jesus was troubled in his spirit as he contemplated his death.

So as Jesus is indignant at the death and the sorrow and the suffering of his people he is also troubled by what that entails because the only way he can raise them from the dead now to promise them the resurrection and the life now is for him to later pay the price for him to die so he's troubled in his spirit because in order to kill death he who is the resurrection and the life must die then the curse will be reversed and because Jesus is the resurrection and the life none of us can find resurrection and life anywhere else so if you're not a believer here with us this morning you have to remember you cannot find that life you cannot find that resurrection apart from him you must turn to him there is no alternative and if you are already a Christian you've entrusted your life to Jesus then let me encourage you to daily seek him and grow in your love for him because as we've talked about how you love him and pursue him in this life is going to matter in the next life this was hard for you to understand for a while and I think maybe a couple illustrations might be helpful for you imagine a sprinter he's an Olympic sprinter he's dedicated his entire life to that one race he's subordinated his relationships his routines all of it so that he can win that race and finally the day has come and he races and his body is prepared for this he's got air in his lungs he sprints and he's faster than anybody else and he crosses that finish line and just tears streaming down his face

[ 35 : 50 ] I'm sure you guys have seen this if you've seen the Olympics because of the reward of all that commitment all that sacrifice all that dedication just now floods him as he's rewarded that joy now imagine in contrast that I somehow by a stroke of luck or a miracle by God won that Olympic race now I'm going to be happy sure but I'm not going to have that joy that gratification that satisfaction that that Olympic sprinter who dedicated his life to that race will have do you understand what I'm saying think about it this way an alternative way think about someone you love really a lot you love very much and then imagine having to be separated from that person for a long time so you have your regular you know phone calls and Skype dates but everyday you pine to be with that person and imagine the day finally comes when you're reunited with that person you run into each other's arms you embrace and tears streaming down your face because you love that person you're reunited with that person and now contrast that imagine that you're separated from a friend that you like but I mean you don't care too much and then you finally reunite

I mean hey that's good to see you you know but there isn't that love the joy the expectation heaven's going to be similar remember the greatest commandment of our Lord is to love him with all our heart soul mind and strength and every Christian will be rewarded every one of us every Christian will be rewarded with perfect union with Christ and through him perfect fellowship with the triune God and we will each be fully satisfied in our respective capacities but our capacities for enjoying the glories and the beauties of Christ are not going to be the same because that depends on how we loved him and served him in this life there's some of you here just the thought of being reunited with Christ brings you to tears and there's some of you who really haven't thought about it too much it's going to matter that's what 2 Corinthians 5:10 implies for we must all stand before Christ to be judged and we will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body everything we do in this earthly body will matter and God will repay as we deserve 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 is even more specific it says that on the judgment day fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done the fire will show if a person's work has any value if the work survives that builder will receive a reward but if the work is burned up the builder will suffer a great loss the builder will be saved but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames there will be a difference on that final judgment there will be some who are saved but just themselves with no lasting work to show God and there will be some who are saved and rewarded for the work they have done

Jonathan Edwards in his book entitled *Charity and Its Fruits* there's a chapter in the whole book at the end called *Heaven a World of Love* and there he writes about heaven and he writes about this he says though all are perfectly free from pride yet as some will have greater degrees of divine knowledge than others and will have larger capacities to see more of the divine perfections so they will see more of their own comparative littleness and nothingness and therefore will be the lowest abased in humility so we will all be fully satisfied in our respective capacities and remember that it's heaven there's no sin there's no pride there's no jealousy or envy or comparison so we are going to be perfectly happy in our own capacities but there will be a difference in our respective capacities to be able to enjoy God his glory and his beauties so then I urge you brothers and sisters if we have no justification for complacency press on to win the prize for which God has called you heavenward in Christ Jesus press in to follow Jesus to love him to pursue him and the greater the love that we have for him the more glorious joyful and beautiful that final blissful union with him will be so let's look forward to that resurrection and our life and live in light of that day let me pray for us

God we want to be people who are defined not by earthly life fleshy life but by the life of the spirit by resurrection life so won't you please capture our imaginations transform our hearts affections so that we love you truly more than anything else in the world so that we truly love you with all our heart soul mind and strength so that we can so that that reunion with you is sweet help us God in Jesus name we pray amen