

Thanksgiving Service for Joy Ash

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Date: 02 July 2014

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] And Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[3 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[5 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[8 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[10 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[12 : 59] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[15 : 29] Amen.

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[17 : 59] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
I have been.
[20 : 29] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[22 : 59] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[25 : 29] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[27 : 59] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[30 : 29] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[32 : 59] Thank you.
Joy.
Thank you.
Thank you.

Thank you.

[35 : 29] Why not.

Thank you.

And you're here.

Joy was a part of the joy.

joy.

[38 : 29] joy. Well done, Alan.

which I hope you're, and you're, and you're, all need.

It's important, it's important, will make their lives meaningful. It may be hope in money, hope in winning the lottery, hope in pleasure, or family, or health even, hope in career, and so on. But all of these hopes are passing hopes. They're here today, perhaps they're here tomorrow and a few years later, but ultimately they all pass away. Inevitably, of course, none of these hopes can help us because at death they must all be taken from us. If hope is vital for us to live, how much more vital is it to have hope in the face of death?

Something which seems in many ways to be hopeless for many people. Sadly, few people do have hope in the face of death. Death is something to be avoided. Death is something to be shunned, put out of the mind. It's morbid. It's serious. It shouldn't be considered.

Many people do have some hope, a vague wish that there is something after death, a dream that perhaps there's a better place to come. But it's only just that, a vague wish, a dream. But not so with the Christian, not so with Christians like Joy, who we've heard about, trusted, and followed, and loved the Lord Jesus most of their life. For the Christian, they can face death with hope, real hope, certain hope.

That's why Paul writes here about those who've died. He says, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep. There's an aside there. For Christians, death is to be feared as much as sleep. It's only a temporary thing. It's only something which, in fact, is good. Those who fall asleep ought to grieve like the rest of men who have no hope. The Christian has a real hope, not a dreamy idea that perhaps there is a God, or some hazy notion that there's a nice place to live on a cloud after we die. When the Bible uses the word hope about a Christian, it means something which is real, but we just can't see it yet. Something which is absolutely certain. It's just out of sight, out of reach, but it's definitely there. It's a bit like that longed-for holiday. You've paid for the tickets in full. You've booked your hotel. You've packed your bags. You're waiting at the airport to go, and in a few moments you'll be off. Except the Christian hope is more certain than that, because a volcano can't stop the flight. An earthquake or anything else, or fog or strikes, can't stop the Christian from arriving at that destination in which they've placed their hope.

[44 : 29] But how can a Christian be so sure? How can a Christian be so certain that there is life everlasting, that there is heaven, that there is something much better than this world in which we live? Is it because they have lived a good life? They think that they deserve somehow to go to heaven.

They've been goody two-shoes, and therefore that's their reward. Do they think that by being religious, and doing all those religious rites and rituals, that somehow God will accept them, and give them an entrance into heaven? Is the confidence of Christian hope in themselves?

Definitely not. Definitely not. For joy, and for every other Christian, the hope of heaven, the hope of life everlasting, the hope of life which is stronger than death, and that overcomes death, it's not because of anything they've ever done. It's not because of anything they could ever do to earn or to deserve that place with God. No, their hope is grounded in somebody else, in someone else who has done for them what they could never do for themselves.

Their hope and their faith is centered upon the life, the person, and the marvelous work of Jesus Christ. That's why Paul here writes, we do not grieve like the rest who have no hope.

Why, we might say? Well, he says, verse 13, we believe that Jesus died and rose again. A Christian's hope is in Jesus Christ. It's in an historic person, in historic facts, in realities.

[46 : 11] It's not a dream that's grounded upon some maybe or perhaps, but upon a person who lived, died, and rose again. And in fact, Paul seems quite strange in one sense by saying that the first thing that the Christian has as a basis for their hope and their faith is death. The death of Jesus Christ.

We believe that Jesus died. The Christian, the death of Jesus, is something marvelous, because his death was unique, because he himself was and is unique. He is the God who became man, the God who stepped down from heaven into this world, the God who walked where we walk and lived and experienced all of human life, experienced weakness and frailty, sorrow and grief, pain, and especially death. See, in the death of Jesus Christ, the Christian has this sure and certain hope of the love of God towards us. Unconditional love. That's why Christ went and died at the cross, willingly, purposefully, because of love for us. He went to suffer and die that terrible death.

That's what God says here in the Bible in Romans 5. God demonstrates, shows the world in one sense, broadcast to everybody. God demonstrates his own love for us in this way. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. You see, the death of Christ for the Christian is not merely a demonstration or proclamation or proof that God loves us. It's certainly that, but it's much more.

The death of Jesus was a great act, a great work of accomplishment, for he died as our substitute. He died in our place. He died the death that should have been ours. Why? Why did he need to die for us?

Why did he need to die in our place? Well, because we are sinners. Joy, like every one of us, was a sinner. Someone who has broken God's good laws. Someone who has said, my will is best. What I want to do in this life is the right thing to do. I don't really care about God's laws too much. If they get in my way, then I just go around them or over them. We have broken God's law. We have pleased ourselves. In fact, we've actually set ourselves up as the God of our lives rather than the true God who created us and sustains us. And in doing so, we have brought upon ourselves the righteous judgment of God.

[49 : 01] God is right to look at us and call us lawbreakers. He's right to look upon us and declare that we should be punished. Declare that there should be an account for how we've lived in lawbreaking, not only in breaking his commandments, but in the manifestation of them in our selfishness, our pride, our greed, our hatred of one another, our jealousy. And we all know the things that go on in our hearts.

That sin separates us from God. He's good. He's holy. He's perfect. He's pure. And that sin will separate us forever from God in hell unless a way can be found to deal with our sin. Unless somebody else is willing to pay the price that we owe God. Somebody else is willing to take the punishment that we deserve for the wrongdoing of our lives. Well, Jesus is that person. On the cross, he took upon himself the full sentence and judgment that we deserve. He said in one sense, God, I want to pay the price that they owe. I want to die the death that they deserve. And he did that willingly and gladly. That's the Christian hope, you see, that there is forgiveness, full and complete, because Jesus has paid the price for us. There's no more debt for us to pay. Because Jesus has bought our forgiveness for us. God is pleased to receive and welcome us into his family and into his home.

There's a lovely hymn that we sing from time to time here. And it has this line, there was no one else good enough to pay the price of sin. He, that's Jesus, only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in. So the Christian hope, the hope that joy had and lived all her life and faced death was this, that Christ died. But the truth of the reality is that it doesn't stop there.

For this Jesus who died, we also believe and no rose again. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, says Paul here, to these Christians as they faced the sorrow of losing dear friends to death.

When the historians who wrote those four gospels, as we call them, and they are historians relating the facts from eyewitness accounts about the very life and death of Jesus, they not only recorded that he lived and he died, they recorded the witness accounts that he was alive, risen again, on the third day. Astonishing facts for his resurrection, where here two saw him, there a dozen, there at one time 500, over the course of 40 days, he showed himself after he had died to be alive and having conquered and overcome death. It's something that he reassuredly had told his friends, the disciples long before he died, that he must rise again. He knew that he would. And it was the inevitable consequence of who he is, that he rose again. He is God. God cannot die. Death cannot keep him. Therefore, he had to defeat death. He had to rise again. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the proof that these physical bodies, when they die, will live. That there is life beyond the grave. That there is life beyond this world. It's not the end. You're not here just for your three score year and ten, or quite a bit more in Joy's case. You're not here just for a time, and that's it.

[52 : 40] There is life that we must have and will have when we face and go through death. Jesus made some extraordinary promises and extraordinary claims while he was alive. On one occasion, as he attended a funeral of his good friend Lazarus, he spoke to his sister, Martha, and he said to Martha, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? He asked her. Just a few moments later, after they'd been speaking, he stood at the tomb of Lazarus, a man who'd been dead four days, and he gave to him resurrection life. He raised him from the dead. So that everybody was astonished, and he walked amongst them and lived amongst them. In one sense, in doing so, he was proving his boast was not in vain. That he is the resurrection. He is the life. That those who do believe in him can and will conquer death and need not fear death. See, the Christian hope is in the resurrection of

Jesus as well as in the death. It's in the love of Jesus that took our sin upon the cross, but it's in the power of Jesus who has overcome death for us that we might not fear it, but might live too eternally. And we might start that life even now as we live in relationship with God.

There's one more thing here, isn't there, that Paul mentions. He says, we do not grieve like the rest who have no hope. We have hope. Why? Because we believe Jesus died, yes, took our sins, so there's forgiveness. Believe he rose again, yes, that he is alive now and has given to us life eternal and everlasting. But also he says this, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who've fallen asleep in him. In other words, the reality of this is that this world is heading toward a climactic conclusion when Jesus Christ will come again.

Just as surely as he was born in that Bethlehem stable, just as surely as he lived this life in this world, just as surely as he died upon the cross, and as surely as he rose again to life everlasting, he is coming again. This world is not spiraling out of control. This world is not in the hands of ISIS, or the Taliban, or the president of the USA, or any other earthly power. This world is in the hands of Almighty God, and he is shaping history and bringing it to that time when Jesus will come again. For Paul writes here, for the Lord himself will come down from heaven. He's coming once more.

He's coming this time not as a baby, not to suffer and to die as he did before, but he is coming as king, as Lord, as God, and as judge of this world. He is coming to execute justice against evil.

[55 : 37] Aren't we sick and tired of seeing wicked and evil men as seemingly getting away with it? Don't we long for justice? Don't we long that God would do something and step into this world?

Well, he's going to, and when he does, he will bring an end to all pain and all death for all those who've put their faith in him. Here's the last book of the Bible, and what it says, when Jesus comes again. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain. This is because Jesus is coming to take his people, those who've put their trust in him, those for whom he died, those who have entrusted themselves into him.

He's coming to take them to be with himself. He's coming to gather them and bring them into that place of life everlasting. Here's what Paul says, the Lord himself will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. And after that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

We'll be with the Lord forever. Jesus promised that to his disciples on the night before his death. He said to them in John 14, I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am.

See the promise of Jesus. You see the wonderful thing for joy is this. Death hasn't taken her. Jesus has taken her. He's coming again, yes, at the end of time to bring all those that are alive to be with him. But even now he has come already to take her to be with him. Not the physical body, the soul. That resurrection body, that living body is yet to come. You see with this hope, with this certainty, with this reality that Jesus is coming again, with this bringing into all things that which is good and perfect, death means nothing to the Christian. It's rendered powerless.

[57 : 40] Elsewhere, Paul speaks about death losing its sting. Yes, we grieve and we mourn and we're lost and we're going to miss joy. But dear friends, for those of us who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, it's just a time of missing her. A time when we shall be reunited with her, but especially with the Lord Jesus Christ. Death has no sting. Death is not the end. Death is not blackness and bleakness.

Rather, the hope the Christian has makes the light shine in the darkness of death. It brings comfort and peace to fearful hearts and to minds. And so, dear friends, I've got to ask you this question, and I hope you're asking it yourself. Do I have that hope? Do you have that hope? That real hope that sustained and made joy the person she was? That real hope that she could face death, longing and looking forward to being with her Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you have that hope as you must face death? As you must face the reality that this life must end? Do you have that hope that changes and transforms life into purposeful, reasonable, satisfying, complete, purposeful living?

You see, it's not a trick. It's not just a sort of a mind game. It's not sort of just a way of positive thinking. It's a reality. It's a reality, and it comes through faith in Jesus Christ. It comes through simply acknowledging that he died for my sins, acknowledging that he is the one who rightfully deserves that place as the Lord of my life, as the God of my life. And it means entrusting my life and my death to him, trusting him that he has dealt with my sin, trusting him that he has conquered death for me, trusting him, trusting him that he will be with me and keep me and bring me into that promised home. Let me assure you of this, that every single person who has put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, every single one, has been faithfully kept. God has never let us down. He will not let us down.

If you come to him as you are, he will never reject you. If you come to him as you are, no matter what your past or your present or your life, he will never turn you away. He is willing and glad to forgive and to wipe the slate clean and to give a new life beginning. Let me urge you. Let me urge you on joy's behalf. Let me urge you in Christ's name to put your faith in him, not to reject him, not to think you can live without him, not to keep on going in that hopeless existence which you know that you have, but rather to yield to him as the one who gives life and hope, the one who gives eternal life, deathless life, fullness of life. Because there is coming a wonderful day, dear friends, when you will experience and know something that is beyond our knowing now. For here I'll close with these words, 1 Corinthians 2, no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him. It's so much better than you've ever contemplated. Let's sing our closing hymn. It's in the sheet there. It reminds us of what we've been thinking about, the reality of the resurrection of Jesus, that he has risen from the grave and it gives us that assurance that we can live and be with him one day too. Thine be the glory, risen, conquering son.

endless is the victory, how often death has won. Angels in Christ here Thou all death hast won
Angels in bright ravens From the snow away Careful fold and wait close Where thy body lay
Thine be the glory Raised concrete sun Endless Israel victory Power of death has won

[62 : 45] O Jesus, Jesus Risen from the tomb Loving thee, Jesus Satisfree and new Let the church
in purpose Hymns of triumph sing For earth will now live Death has lost its sin Guide me
the glory Risen concrete sun Endless is the victory Thou all death hast won No more we
doubt thee

Glorious prince of mine Thy mistrust without thee Ain't our sin of strife Make us one and
conquer us Through thy death has won Bring us safe through Jordan To thy home among
Thine be the glory Thine be the glory Risen concrete sun Endless is the victory Thou all
death hast won Now may the God of hope Fill you with all joy and peace As you trust in
him So that you may overflow with hope

By the power of the Holy Spirit Amen Please be seated Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen
Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[66 : 36] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you. There are refreshments, please do stay if
you can. Afterwards, there's also a collection at the back for one of the charities that Joy
and the family are very keen on as well.

Thank you again so much for sharing in this time. Thank you.