

The Road to Death is the Road to Life

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to turn to our Bible reading now, and Edward has been taking us through John chapter 11 and chapter 12, and we've come this evening to John chapter 12 and verse 9.

And you'll find that on page 898 if you have one of our Red Vista's Bibles. And we pick up the story after the raising of Lazarus, and then after Jesus visiting the household of Lazarus' family in Bethany.

And verse 9 says, When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came not only on account of him, but also to see Lazarus, whom he'd raised from the dead.

So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him, many of the Jews were going away and believing Jesus.

The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.

[1 : 2 1] And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it's written, Fear not, daughter of Zion, behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt. His disciples didn't understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.

The crowd that had been with him when he first called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to see him was that they heard he had done this sign.

So the Pharisees said to one another, you see, you're gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him. Now among those who went up to worship Jesus at the feast were some Greeks.

So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, Sir, we wish to see Jesus. Philip went and told Andrew. Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

And Jesus answered them, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

[2 : 3 7] But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Amen. Amen. And may God bless to us his word. Well, let us turn in our Bibles to John's Gospel, Chapter 12, on page 899.

And my title for this evening is The Road to Death is the Road to Life. There are many things which assure us that Jesus is who he says he is.

So, for example, his resurrection from the dead assures us of that. His ascension to glory. His works of power. His mighty miracles. But one of the most powerful things that he has done is the fact that again and again he fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament.

[4 : 08] And a big feature of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, is the way that the four evangelists keep on making this point. They keep on saying things like, this was to fulfill what the prophet Isaiah said.

Or these are the words of Jeremiah the prophet. And the evangelists quote the prophets, the Psalms, and the books of Moses, the law. And their invariable reason for doing this is to say to us, Jesus is the one that every section of the Old Testament points towards.

Now, a good example of this comes in our section for this evening at John chapter 12, verses 14 and 15. Just have a look with me at those verses. But you'll see that John tells us that Jesus sat on a donkey.

Now, that's hardly an extraordinary fact in itself. Many people have sat on donkeys throughout history. But John's point is that this simple action of Jesus is highly significant because it fulfills something written by the prophet Zechariah, who was prophesying back in the 6th century BC.

And when you look at the words of Zechariah, and we'll be doing that in a few minutes' time, they help us to understand who Jesus was and what he came to do.

[5 : 25] And all this greatly strengthens our assurance that Jesus really is the Son of God who came to bring eternal salvation to his people. Now, if we ask, but what does it mean for Jesus to fulfill Old Testament prophecy?

The answer is this. Think of a template or a pattern. And then think of something else that neatly fits into that pattern. Now, here's an example from our everyday life.

Imagine that you're applying for a job. Difficult business these days. Anyway, you sit down and you spend hours and hours looking at a hundred job descriptions. You read all the magazines.

You scan all the websites. You get discouraged. You think to yourself, I'm never going to get a job. And then suddenly you see a job description that looks as if it might be just the right thing.

So you apply. And lo and behold, you get an interview. And shortly afterwards, the company comes back to you and says, you are exactly the person we're looking for. You fit our requirements precisely.

[6 : 32] We'll see you on Monday morning, please, at nine o'clock sharp. So what has happened there is that you match the template. You fit the job description.

Now, in a sense, the whole of the Old Testament is one great template. The template is created by the aching need of mankind.

Mankind from Genesis chapter three onwards is alienated from God, expelled from the Garden of Eden under the dreadful cloud of the anger of God. The Old Testament shows that what mankind needs, therefore, is forgiveness and reconciliation, the care of a loving shepherd.

We need a king to rule us, a sacrificial lamb to atone for our sins. We need a priest to restore us to fellowship with God. We need a teacher to explain God's ways to us, a guide to help us through the storms of life, a light to shine into the darkness of our hearts.

And finally, we need a conqueror of death itself. Now, there is only one who can fulfill all those roles or any of them, and that is Jesus.

[7 : 48] And the evangelists and the apostles, the authors of the New Testament, show us on page after page that Jesus is the one who fulfills every feature of the Old Testament template.

As Jesus himself put it at the very end of Luke's gospel, everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Thus, it is written that the Christ must suffer and on the third day rise from the dead. And if you were to do an exhaustive Bible study on the hundreds of Old Testament passages which are quoted by the evangelists and the apostles in the New Testament, you would end up with a mass of material.

The New Testament authors are saying to us, Jesus matches all the Old Testament templates. And we are showing you how he fulfills them so that you can be assured and fully confident that he is the divine savior who is able to rescue us from condemnation and death and to bring us to eternal life.

That's what the New Testament is all about. The New Testament is saying to us, this is the one. Trust him, therefore. Well, now let's turn to John chapter 12, verses 12 to 26, so that we can see how John explains and interprets this famous Palm Sunday ride that Jesus took into the city of Jerusalem.

[9 : 15] We'll see that John teaches us first that Jesus rode into Jerusalem in order to die a purposeful and saving death. And secondly, John teaches us that we too must die to self in order to be fruitful for the kingdom of heaven.

So it's about the death of Jesus, but it's also about the death of you and me. First then, from verses 12 to 19, Jesus rode into Jerusalem in order to die a purposeful, saving death.

Well, have a look first at the ominous words spoken by Jesus' enemies in verse 19. The Pharisees say to one another, as they see this triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem, they say to each other, you see that you're gaining nothing.

Look, the world has gone after him. So this group of Pharisees are looking on at the cheering crowds, the almost mass hysteria that accompanies Jesus riding in on the donkey.

And they hate what they see. They hate the popularity of Jesus. In fact, look back to chapter 11, verse 53. So from that day on, they made plans.

[10 : 29] This is the chief priests and Pharisees. They made plans to put him to death. Now, the immediate trigger for this determination, this plan to kill Jesus, had been the raising of Lazarus from the dead earlier in chapter 11.

If you look back to 11:45, you see that many of the Jews were turning to Jesus because they had witnessed the raising of Lazarus. So the chief priests and the Pharisees, they call a meeting of the council, the Sanhedrin, in verse 47.

And they say to each other in verse 48, if this carries on, this is 11:48, if this carries on, Jesus is going to start a popular uprising and the Romans, our overlords, will stamp on us.

They will take away our place and our nation. They will destroy Judaism. So we've got to stop this. We've got to eliminate this threat to our whole way of life. And the way of doing that, quite simply, is to kill Jesus.

So when Jesus rides into Jerusalem in chapter 12, verse 12, it's not like you or me riding into Glasgow on an open top bus to view the beauties of George Street or Glasgow Green and then round off a happy day out with a cream tea.

[11 : 45] It's not that kind of visit at all. This was a ride into the teeth of hostility. This was a ride into the lion's mouth. And Jesus knew it. As he says in verse 23, 12, 23, the hour has come.

Indeed, it had. Of course, he'd been preparing for this all along. He'd been teaching his uncomprehending disciples for two or three years. The Son of Man must be betrayed and delivered into the hands of the priests and Pharisees to be rejected and condemned and put to death.

Jesus, of course, was not deceived by the applause of the crowd. As our hymn puts it that we've just sung, ride on, ride on in majesty. As all the crowds, Hosanna cry.

Through waving branches, slowly ride, O Savior, to be crucified. Now, this was the Sunday before Passover. Passover was to be celebrated the following Sabbath, the next Saturday.

And Jesus knew full well where he would be five days after that Sunday. He had said to his disciples back in John 10, verse 17, He was in charge of everything.

[13 : 16] So he rode into Jerusalem, clear-sighted, purposefully determined, to lay down his life so that we should not be eternally lost. His death is the price of our life, our eternal life.

Well, now, let's look carefully at verses 13, 14, and 15 here in chapter 12 because the strength of these verses lies in the details. Let's have a look at some of the details here.

First of all, let's notice in verse 13 that they took branches of palm trees. Now, palm branches at this part of history had come to symbolize Jewish nationalism rather in the way that the flag of St. Andrew, the Scottish saltire, has become a symbol of Scottish nationalism, especially in recent years.

I'll never forget that moment in the summer of 2013. I'm sure you'll remember it, when Andy Murray won the men's singles at Wimbledon for the first time.

The crowd, of course, was in uproar because of this great victory. And just seconds after the final shot, the television cameras panned round to the royal box. And there was the leader of the Scottish Nationalist Party, Mr. Salmond.

[14 : 27] And he was waving a large Scottish saltire from side to side, and he was grinning from ear to ear. And the irony of it was that just below him, I think on the very next row down, sat Mr. Cameron, the very English prime minister, with a face like a boiled ham.

And Mr. Cameron's face seemed to be saying two things at once. I'm very pleased that Britain has won this important competition. But I have eyes in the back of my head, and I know exactly what Mr. Salmond is doing behind me.

Now, the palm branches in Jerusalem, they were a little bit like the Scottish saltire in the hands of a Scottish nationalist. The palm branch was a potent symbol of the Jews making a bid for independence.

Now, the Jews in Israel, back then in 30 or 31 AD, were a nation who had been under the heel of the Romans for the best part of a century. The Romans, they'd come to certain accommodations with the Jews.

They allowed the Jews to keep their temple up and running and their synagogues. They allowed them to celebrate Passover and the other major festivals. They allowed them to keep their royal family, the Herods.

[15 : 37] But Rome was the real power in the land. And the Jews hoped that one day a liberator Messiah, a king, would be sent to them who would free them from their servitude to the occupying power.

So when Jesus appeared and began to demonstrate supernatural powers over sickness, over demons, and in the case of Lazarus and others, over death itself, people began to ask, could this be the Christ, a political liberator Christ?

Now, here we are in John chapter 12, just a few days before the Passover. Now, the Passover was a big event. It was one of the major festivals on the calendar. And huge numbers of Jews, possibly hundreds of thousands, would come in from all across the country on pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

And at this time of the year, there was inevitably a heightened sense of Jewish nationhood, perhaps also of Jewish nationalism. Now, look carefully at verses 13 and 14.

As Jesus comes to Jerusalem, initially, it seems, on foot, the crowd wave their palm branches, their saltires, if you like, and they start to cry out some words from Psalm 118, which was a psalm often used at the major festivals.

[16 : 57] And quoting from the psalm, they shout out, Hosanna, which literally means, give salvation now. Not the same thing as hallelujah, which means praise the Lord.

Hosanna means give salvation now. And then they shout, still quoting from the psalm, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. But then they add, and this is not part of the psalm, even the king of Israel.

So what they're doing here is taking the familiar and rather nationalistic words of Psalm 118, and in their whipped up and frenzied state of mind, they're adding their own further shout, this is our king, the king of Israel, our Messiah, our liberator.

But, verse 14, at that point of fervor and excitement, Jesus does something which would have dampened their enthusiasm considerably. He finds a young donkey, and he sits on it.

Now try to imagine the scene. There's the roadway. There are great crowds there stretching back 10 or 12 deep. Imagine two friends at the back of the crowd, and they're straining to see what's going on in the roadway.

[18 : 10] But there are so many people there, they can only get a glimpse. So one of the friends says to the other, what can you see, Benjamin? And Benjamin replies, I think, I think, Ruben, I think he's mounting an animal.

Really? Is it a white stallion? Is it 17 hands high, with a neck and mane like lightning and thunder? I'm not sure. I'll keep looking. Yes.

He's coming into view now. He's, he's... You could knock me down with a feather. I can hardly believe it. He's riding a donkey.

A what? D-O-N-K-E-Y. A donkey. Now here's where the fulfillment of prophecy comes in. John explains to us here in verses 14 and 15 that Jesus riding on a donkey fulfills the words of Zechariah chapter 9.

So 14 and 15, just as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion, behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt. Now I think it would be very helpful if we all turn to Zechariah chapter 9 just for a couple of minutes.

[19 : 21] And you'll find that if you'll turn back with me to page 797. Page 797. Now the relevant section here is verses 9, 10 and 11.

You'll see verse 9, Behold, your king is coming to you humble and mounted on a donkey. That's the one quoted there in chapter 12, John 12. But I'll also read verses 10 and 11.

I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem and the battle bow shall be cut off and he shall speak peace to the nations. His rule shall be from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.

As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Now when a New Testament writer quotes a verse from the Old Testament, the New Testament writer, like John here, is assuming that the reader will take note not only of the quoted verse, but of the larger passage and context in which that verse is set.

So John is virtually assuming that the interested reader of his 12th chapter will quickly reach for Zechariah chapter 9, just as we've done, and we'll have a look at the context.

[20 : 42] So what do we find in these verses which might help us to understand what John is saying about Jesus? Let's notice three things. First, the king of Jerusalem, verse 9, is gentle and humble.

The word humble is used there in verse 9. And the fact that he's mounted on a donkey's colt and not on some mighty war horse shows us how humble he is.

Now to put this in modern terms, if a conquering ruler, a warlord, rides into a city, a city that he's just conquered, he will ride in on top of a huge tank with a great gun sticking out at the front.

And that ruler is saying, watch out, I am warlike and you'd better fear me. But if a ruler were to drive into a city in a Fiat Panda or on a bicycle, he might be seen to be saying, I'm coming in peace.

Now Jesus' donkey is a kind of Fiat Panda. He is saying, I'm not coming into Jerusalem as a firebrand warlord. Yes, I am the king of Israel, but I'm a gentle king.

[21 : 53] In the words of Zechariah 9, verse 10, look on to verse 10, I'm cutting off, I'm eliminating the chariot and the war horse and a battle bow. I'm not that kind of king.

I am indeed a king. And verse 9, I bring salvation, but I'm a humble king. Then secondly, this gentle king, as the second half of verse 10 puts it, will speak peace to the nations.

That means the Gentile nations. That's part of his role to bring peace to the Gentiles. Do you remember how Paul puts this in Ephesians chapter 2, writing about Jesus?

He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. Peace to the far off Gentiles as well as to the nearby Jews.

Zechariah is saying the same thing as Paul, but Zechariah said it 500 years earlier. Peace to the Gentiles. Now the Gentiles were always going to be included in the scope of God's salvation.

[22 : 57] If that were not so, you and I would not be here this evening worshipping Christ. Peace to the nations. And as verse 10 puts it, his rule will eventually be universal from sea to sea, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and from the river, that's the river Euphrates, right to the ends of the earth.

And indeed, that is happening. That's why we find churches all over the world, from Alaska to Tasmania. And those last two phrases in verse 10 are themselves a quotation from an earlier document from Psalm 72, which would have been written four or five hundred years before Zechariah's time.

So here is John the Evangelist quoting from Zechariah and also quoting from the Psalm as well. So John is showing that the prophecies of the scriptures are themselves cumulative and they all find their fulfillment in King Jesus.

So this humble king of Israel, John is saying, will bring salvation to Gentiles as well as to Jews. But now thirdly, from verse 11 in Zechariah 9, this gentle donkey-mounted king will set prisoners free from the waterless pit.

That's a picture of imminent destruction. If you're deep down in a pit without water, your days are numbered, aren't they? So he will set them free from death. Why? Because of the blood of my covenant with you.

[24 : 28] Because of the blood of God's covenant. So here is Jesus riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, knowing that in four days' time he would be saying to his disciples, drink this, for this is the blood of the new covenant which is shed for you.

And knowing that in five days' time on the Friday, that blood would indeed be shed as the means of setting many prisoners free from the power of death. Now let's turn back to John chapter 12, page 899, 899.

And let's notice how John, as soon as he's made the quotation there in verse 15, he adds this very interesting verse 16. His disciples did not understand these things at first.

But when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. So his disciples simply didn't understand at the time.

John himself was one of those disciples. So he is saying, Peter and James and I and the others, we couldn't make head or tail of this Palm Sunday ride at the time.

[25 : 38] But later on, when Jesus was glorified, in other words, after his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension to glory, after all that, we finally understood how his actions on Palm Sunday were the fulfillment of Zechariah chapter 9.

And surely that verse 16 shows us that in the weeks and months after Jesus had ascended, the apostles were studying the prophets. John and the others would have been pouring over the scripture text together, studying them, discussing them, and asking the question, well, how did Jesus fulfill these prophecies?

So this verse 16 says a lot to us about the relationship between the two testaments of the Bible, how the evangelists and the apostles came to understand the Old Testament. That relationship has been well put like this.

The new is in the old concealed, the old is in the new revealed. I'll say that again a bit more slowly. It's a very great way of, it's a lovely thing.

The new is in the old concealed, the old is in the new revealed. So in quoting Zechariah in the New Testament, John is revealing the truth written down five or six centuries beforehand.

[27 : 00] Let me put it like this. The New Testament is about Jesus. It teaches us his identity, his character and his achievements. His identity, who he is, his character, what he is like, his achievements, what he has done.

And the Old Testament, which points down the road of history to Jesus in a thousand different ways, illuminates and clarifies his identity, his character and his achievements.

So the prophecy from Zechariah shows us how Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to die a purposeful, saving death. Yes, he is a gentle, humble king.

He has come to bring peace with God to Gentiles as well as to Jews. And his death sets us free from death because of the blood of God's covenant.

Well now, secondly, and more briefly, John is teaching us, Jesus is teaching us, that we too must die to self in order to be fruitful for the kingdom of heaven.

[28 : 11] We too must die. Now between verse 19 and verse 20, you'll see there's a paragraph break there, but between 19 and 20, a corner is turned.

One of Paul's repeated phrases, especially in Romans, but in a sense this runs through the New Testament, Paul says, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Now that's the historical order of the proclamation of the gospel. It started coming to the Jews and then was spread amongst the Gentiles, the Greeks, and so on. That's just what we see here in John chapter 12.

At verse 19, those Pharisees, as they say to each other, we're gaining nothing, what they're doing there is they're shutting the door in the face of Jesus. We've hit the buffers, we're gaining nothing.

But at verse 20, the door immediately begins to open for the Greeks. Some Gentile Greeks come to Philip, the apostle, and they say to him, Sir, we wish to see Jesus.

[29 : 12] So Philip consults Andrew and the two of them go together to Jesus. John doesn't tell us whether Jesus and these Greeks actually had a meeting, but what he does tell us is the words that Jesus utters at this point.

verse 23, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. In other words, the events that are going to open the door to the Gentiles are now beginning.

And those events, the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension are now relentlessly underway. The hour has come. And what Jesus says in verse 24 is surely in the first instance about himself, about his own imminent death.

Verse 24, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Now that's a straightforward horticultural, agricultural metaphor. You can't grow a beautiful ear of wheat carrying 30 or 40 grains unless you first sow one grain.

[30 : 20] And that one grain, once it's in the soil, rots and disappears as the strong new green plant grows out of it. If the grain dies, the consequence is great fruitfulness.

But if the grain does not die, if it's not planted, it remains alone, says Jesus, isolated and unproductive. In verse 24, Jesus is looking with clear, steady eyes at his own forthcoming death.

And he's saying that his death, far from being a tragedy or a failure, is going to be enormously fruitful. And when you think of the countless millions who have put their trust in Christ over the last 20 centuries, you can begin to grasp something of the fruitfulness that Jesus is talking about here.

That's why we call the day he died Good Friday, not Tragedy Friday or Bad Friday. It's Good Friday. And verse 24 teaches us why it is so good.

Because it's so fruitful. But as soon as we get to verse 25, Jesus broadens the scope of his teaching. He applies the principle of fruitfulness through death to each and every one of his followers.

[31 : 33] So verse 25, whoever loves his life loses it. Sorry, whoever loves his life loses it. And whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Now, friends, we cannot get closer to the heart of what it means to be a Christian than we do here in verse 25. The one who will enjoy eternal life is the one who is willing to hate his life in this world.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor who was executed by the Nazis in 1945, just before the end of the war, once wrote this, when Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.

That's what this verse is about. So let's work at it for a couple of minutes. To be a Christian involves, at one level, a loss of identity.

The grain of wheat which falls into the earth loses its shape, its color, its character, its everything. It rots away, disappears.

[32 : 40] Its place is then taken by something glorious and fruitful. But the grain of wheat itself must die. Now this means for us that the sense of self, of which we're naturally so proud, needs to rot away and disappear.

Maybe it's a sense of family pride. A person might say, I'm descended from the MacNeils of Barra, or from the Campbells of Argyle, or from the Lobs of Cornwall.

Or there can be a pride in our achievements, the things that we've done. I was in that Scottish rugby team that walloped the English in 1990. Or, I've been called the best cellist in Scotland.

Now it's good to play the cello well, it's good to play rugby well, even against England. And there's no shame in being called Campbell or Lobb. But the question is, are we willing to sit loose to our precious sense of who we are and what we are?

If we're not, our life ends up in being all about me, about my ambitions, my reputation, my plans, my powers and abilities, my pleasures.

[33 : 51] And if that's how I end up, it means that the grain of wheat that is me has not fallen into the ground and died. It's still intact. But where is it?

Look at verse 24. It remains alone. To serve the God of self is to be ultimately and finally isolated.

It's an ugly way to live and it's a gruesome way to die. The world around us presses us to serve at the altar of self-gratification. But how would we rather live?

With a desperate struggle for self-preservation which ends in aloneness and loss? or with a glad rejection of the demands of self so that we can serve the Lord Jesus and be enduringly fruitful?

If there's a loss of identity at one level, at a much more important level, we discover the glorious, true way of life that we were made for.

[34 : 52] Look at verse 26. If anyone serves me, that's the person who's willing to fall into the ground and die like a grain. If anyone serves me, he must follow me.

And where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Now you'll see that twice in that verse, Jesus says, if anyone serves me.

So let's look at both of those times that he uses the phrase. First, if anyone serves me, he must follow me. Now that means not only follow my teaching and obey my teaching, but follow my pathway, my pattern of life.

He must put his shoes in my footsteps. And the pattern of Jesus's life that we're called to follow is to die, to be raised, and to be glorified.

So we learn to die with Jesus, to die to the demands of self-centeredness. And that can be very costly. But that death to self is followed by resurrection and glorification.

[36 : 00] In Jesus's words here, where I am, there will my servant be also. It is necessary and unavoidable that we share every stage with him.

That's what it means to follow him, to follow his pattern. There's no resurrection and glory for us without first dying to the rule of self. And indeed, that might involve being prepared to die physically, to be martyred for the sake of Christ if we're called on to do that.

But look at the joyful incentive in the next phrase. Where I am, there will my servant be also. That's what makes the dying bearable and more than bearable.

Wonderful. We're to be with him. We're in the best company. The person who lives for self is alone, as verse 24 puts it. But the person who dies to self is with Christ.

It would be madness not to want to be with him. The dying is worth it a thousand times over. But then look at the second phrase, the second incentive at the very end there.

[37 : 04] If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Now the servant of Christ may well receive a great deal of dishonor in this world.

At times we may be shunned or ostracized, called all sorts of unpleasant things. Penalties may be laid against us. But to be honored in the end by God the Father, to be invited to sit at table in the kingdom of heaven and to enjoy forever the company of the Father, the Son, the angels, and the redeemed.

All those from every nation and tribe and tongue who have been rescued by Christ. Isn't that an extraordinary and wonderful thought? That little Joe Soap, that's me, little Josephine Soap, that's you, that we should be honored by God the Father, isn't that worth more than all the accolades that the whole world could heap upon us?

What we're called to is resurrection and glory. But there's only one root to it. We must die. Die to self and live for the Lord Jesus.

Verse 25. Whoever loves his life loses it. Whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

[38 : 21] That's what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The road to death, the road through death, proves to be the road to life.

God, let's bow our heads and we'll pray. Our dear Lord Jesus, we thank you very much for this wonderful, challenging, and yet very vitalizing teaching that you give us here about the meaning of our life and the way that we're to dispose of it if we're to follow you.

How we thank you for these glorious, wonderful incentives. And we pray that you will help us therefore carefully, thoughtfully, courageously if necessary to place our feet in the marks that you yourself have made and that you'll help us to follow your pattern, to follow you, to follow you through death to resurrection and glory.

And we ask it so that your name should be covered with glory. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.