

58. Our True Comfort in Life and Death (2007)

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[0 : 00] Well, do now turn with me in your Bibles, and we read once again in the book of Genesis, chapter 49, at the very end of the chapter, beginning to read at verse 28.

It's page 43, if you have one of our church Bibles. Otherwise, it's very near the beginning of whichever Bible you have. Now, we pick up the story of this dramatic end time of Jacob's life.

We've seen he announces his coming death at the end of chapter 47, and makes Joseph swear that he will take him back and bury him in the land of Canaan, not in Egypt.

He then formally adopts Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, as his own sons and blesses them.

And then we saw in chapter 49 how he blesses all of his sons. And now, at verse 28, we read, All these are the twelve tribes of Israel.

[1 : 14] This is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each with the blessing suitable to him. Then he commanded them and said to them, I am to be gathered to my people.

Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephraim the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephraim the Hittite to possess as a burying place.

There they buried Abraham and Sarah, his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah, his wife. And there I buried Leah. The field and the cave that is in it were bought from the Hittites.

When Jacob finished commanding his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed and breathed his last and was gathered to his people. Then Joseph fell on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him.

And Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. Forty days were required for it.

[2 : 28] That is how many are required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days. When the days of weeping for him were passed, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, My father made me swear, saying I am about to die.

In my tomb that I hewed out for myself in the land of Canaan, there shall you bury me. Now, therefore, let me please go up and bury my father.

Then I will return. And Pharaoh answered, Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear. So Joseph went up to bury his father. Notice that language, by the way.

With him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of the household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, as well as all the household of Joseph and his brothers and his father's household.

Only their children, their flocks, and their herds were left in the land of Goshen. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen. It was a very great company.

[3 : 35] When they came to the threshing floor of Attad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a very great and grievous lamentation. And he made a mourning for his father seven days.

When the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning on the threshing floor of Attad, they said, This is a grievous mourning by the Egyptians. And therefore the place was named Avel Mizraim.

You'll see that means a mourning or a meadow of Egypt. Thus his sons did for him as he had commanded them. For the sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephraim the Hittite, to possess as a burying place.

After he buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone up with him to bury his father. Amen.

And may God bless to us this his word. Well, let's turn, shall we, to Genesis chapter 49. I think perhaps we need these doors open a little bit just to let a bit of air circulate through.

[4 : 56] I can see people feeling a bit muggy today. Is that right? Yes. Don't want you to fall asleep. Not yet anyway. Genesis 49 at verse 28 to chapter 50 verse 14.

A passage I think that is all about our true comfort in life and death. It's rather striking that we come to this passage about a grand funeral in a week where our nation will experience a very grand funeral, that of Baroness Thatcher.

Whatever one's politics may be, it's certainly difficult to deny the significance of her premiership. Undoubtedly, the strongest peacetime leader this nation can remember.

Many have used the word greatest. And although, of course, she was a very divisive figure, perhaps especially here in Scotland, I think that's true, it's been remarkable how few of her opponents are willing to deny her very great respect in her death.

And when we recall the momentous changes, not only in this nation but in the world, that occurred during the time of Thatcher and Reagan, we've been seeing it in our newspapers and on our screens all this week, haven't we?

[6 : 12] Not least the collapse of communism, the end of the Cold War. And I'm sure many of us are very thankful that the 1970s that I grew up in are a time of the past.

But whatever our views may be about that, what is very clear in all of this this week is that the events and the words that surround a death and burial really speak most loudly not about a person's death but about their life, what they really lived for, and their legacy in the world.

It's often around a funeral, isn't it, that we see with great clarity what the life of a person has really been all about. And that is certainly so with Jacob's funeral that we read about here in Genesis 49 and 50.

Jacob's is the grandest funeral that's recorded in the whole Bible. Makes even, I think, the pomp and ceremony of a British state occasion, which probably is one of the few things that we can still do right and show the world.

It makes that even, I think, pale into insignificance. And the words and the events recorded surrounding Jacob's burial are indeed a very great moment.

[7 : 35] Everything is of huge significance. The language used, the things that are said and done, even the very structure of the account in our Bibles. And what dominates everything is the burial place, the tomb of the patriarchs, the place Abram had bought as a sure possession all those years ago.

The story begins with Jacob's instructions about it. It ends with the brother's fulfillment of those instructions. And in the center, in verses 5 and 6 of chapter 50, it's the tomb in Canaan that is at the center of Joseph's request to Pharaoh as he asks to go and bury his father there.

So we're left in absolutely no doubt where Jacob's heart was fixed. He knew, and he wanted all his people to know, that his true comfort in life and death was to be found in a tomb, in a burial place, among the people of God's promise, and in the place that was a tangible pledge of that promise from God.

And friends, this account is preserved in our Bibles so that we might likewise understand with Jacob what is our only true comfort in life and death.

So I want to look at this passage under three sections. Truly focus on the message of Jacob's faith and of Jacob's funeral. And then Jacob's family.

[9 : 13] First of all, verses 49 to 50, and again at the end in chapter 50, verses 12 and 13, in these brackets of the passage, we see the solemn command of Jacob's faith.

A solemn command that speaks of a certain expectation and reminds us that God's people have a great possession, a true pledge of life.

Verse 29, Then he commanded them and said to them, I am to be gathered to my people. Bring me with my father, bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephraim the Hittite, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought.

Verse 33, When he finished commanding his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed and breathed his last. In chapter 50, verse 12, Thus his sons did for him as he commanded.

A solemn command, which they took very seriously indeed, and indeed a revealing command, because it shows that right at the last and right to the last, there was a longing for the land of Canaan, the promised land, which showed that Jacob was above all a man of faith.

[10 : 35] It's not just nostalgia. There's something far deeper than that here. This is the third time Jacob has spoken about being buried in that place. And indeed God had promised him exactly that as he journeyed himself down to Egypt to meet Joseph.

He must go back there. Why? Well, simply because the true homeland of Israel and indeed of all Abraham's seed is not Egypt, but Canaan.

And all those who are of true faith must make an exodus to the place they truly belong, even if it's only in their death. You see, the very fact that Jacob was so concerned to go back there, even though his body was dead, is testimony to the fact that he knew that not even the present physical land of Canaan was his ultimate home.

Hebrews chapter 11 tells us plainly that all the patriarchs knew that they were really strangers and exiles on the earth, that they were looking for and that they were waiting for the true homeland, a better country where God would dwell with his people forever.

But you see, in that burial place in Canaan lay Jacob's great assurance of that great expectation. So his desire to be buried in that tomb, it's not a nostalgic longing for the past, it's a faith-filled longing for the future, for life, not for death.

[12 : 09] Jacob had a certain expectation of life beyond the grave, life in the presence of God and in the presence of God's people.

That's evident, I think, in the words he uses in verse 29 when he speaks to his sons. I am to be gathered to my people, he says. He's not just meaning there that he'll be buried beside them.

That's plain if you look at verse 33 where we're told he breathed his last and was gathered to his people long before he was buried. He is expecting to be reunited with loved ones in a reunion that is beyond death.

We can't be dogmatic about exactly how clearly Jacob understood all of that. Well, as I've said, Hebrews 11 is pretty clear about what the patriarch's expectations were.

And Jesus himself, of course, is very explicit. Do you remember? He said plainly that Moses wrote about eternal life, indeed that he wrote about resurrection.

[13 : 16] Read Mark chapter 12 if you don't believe me. You'll see there how dismissive he was of the skeptical scholars of his day who said that the Old Testament knew nothing about resurrection to life, just like many do today.

Jesus' verdict? You are quite wrong, he said. You know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. Indeed, don't forget that Jacob was a man who had seen God, who had wrestled with God, who had seen the heavens open, and had seen a stairway going up with angels ascending and descending.

He knew that there was a world far beyond and far greater than just this earth. And he knew that it was real. He knew that God was real. And that is the whole of the faith of the Old Testament.

Bruce Waltke, the scholar, reminds us that for the whole Old Testament, life is a relationship with the living God. But before clinical death, but also going on after death.

Not all, of course, did die. Enoch, remember, back in Genesis chapter 5, walked with God. Elijah, later on, went up in a chariot of fire. But to deny that this is the faith of the saints of old just means that you don't know the Bible, as Jesus said.

[14 : 43] The psalmists are very clear constantly in their expectation. We read it at the beginning of the service, Psalm 73, I am continually with you. You hold my right hand. You give me your counsel.

And afterward, you will receive me into glory. My flesh and my heart will fail. But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Think of Job's great expectation. After my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God. Read Isaiah chapter 25 and chapter 26.

Read Daniel chapter 12. Read the Proverbs, which so often are testimony to the great hope of the wise, those who fear the Lord and find wisdom. In the path of righteousness, he says, is life.

And in its pathway there is no death. Proverbs 12, verse 28. I could go on and on, but you can see Jacob had this certain expectation of an ongoing relationship of life with the God of life and with his people beyond earthly death.

[15 : 59] And as his death approached, all his focus was on his place of burial because in that lay his great comforting assurance that that certain expectation was real and was personally his.

The tomb, you see, was a tangible possession, if you like, in the here and now. It was a pledge that God's promise for the future was true.

Look at the emphatic words describing the burying place in chapter 49, verse 30, and again in chapter 50, verse 13. We're told it was a place Abraham bought so that he would possess it, that is, permanently and indisputably.

Back in chapter 23 of Genesis, you can read the story and you'll see that that's the great emphasis all through the account. Abraham acquired a possession, property, a tangible hold, a pledge in the promised land of a promised future.

A possession in the present that guarantees a future. And that's why it's so, so important to Jacob at the end of his life here to be buried there.

[17 : 16] Not, notice, not verse 31 to be buried beside his beloved wife Rachel. Do you see that? Not in her grave at Bethlehem, but with Leah, the wife he didn't love, and with the patriarchs in that grave of possession in Canaan.

You see, it's not about sentimentality. It's about faith. It's about grasping the pledge that God had given. that assured that his promise of the future was true and would be Jacob's as well.

A refuge in death that guaranteed life. A burial among those to whom God had promised an everlasting home. Because he had that comforting assurance and only because he had that could he thus die in peace.

he had it on oath that he would be buried in possession of God's pledge of life everlasting. And so, verse 33, he drew up his feet into the bed and breathed his last.

John Calvin says, death is by its nature formidable and great torments agitate the wicked when they perceive that they are summoned to the tribunal of God.

[18 : 45] And that's true, we know. But he says it is the effect of a good conscience to be able to depart out of this world without terror.

Not in a subjective sense of a good conscience, he doesn't mean that, he means in the objective sense of knowing that there is nothing to condemn us before the judgment seat of God, knowing that we are right with God, righteous before him, as the Bible puts it.

The wicked is overthrown through his evil doing, but the righteous find refuge in their death, says Proverbs 14, verse 32. Likewise, Proverbs 10, verse 2, treasures gained by the wicked do not profit, but righteousness delivers from death.

Because those who trust and stake all on the promise of the God of covenant mercy have a possession, a pledge in life of righteousness that is a clear conscience beyond death on the great day of judgment.

That is what Jacob had as evidenced by his solemn command of faith. He found refuge in the burial that guaranteed deliverance and life.

[20 : 13] He had a great personal assurance of his great expectation. That's why he could die in such dignity and peace. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could have such comforting assurance and such a certain expectation of life going on through death even in the presence of God and his people?

If we could have a pledge as Jacob did in that burial place, wouldn't that be wonderful? Well, friends, let me tell you that we can. Indeed, we have a gospel that tells us that if we have trusted Christ, we have already been buried in a grave that guarantees resurrection to life eternal.

We have been buried with Christ. In fact, that's the wonderful, comforting assurance that this tangible sign of baptism that we've seen this morning, that it proclaims afresh to us every time we see it so wonderfully and so vividly.

Because Paul says in Romans chapter 6, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, his death. That's what happened when we were united to Christ by faith, when we trusted in him.

And Paul says, if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

[21 : 47] We are delivered from the condemnation of sin by our burial with Jesus. through his cross where he died for our sins.

And so we know that if we have trusted Christ, we can face judgment with a clear conscience. We have that pledge, we have that assurance through the Spirit poured into our hearts who bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

That we shall live forever as his children without sin. because Jesus has been raised from the grave. And we likewise will be raised from the grave with him by that same spirit.

And so a tomb, a grave also saves us. And our baptism into Jesus' death saves us, says Peter.

not of course by the physical act of washing with water. Peter's very plain about that in 1 Peter 3 verse 21. But rather, he says, by the spiritual act of God in Christ which baptism proclaims, his death for our sins and his resurrection for our justification.

[23 : 06] That is, says Peter, the pledge of a good conscience towards God for us. And friends, the tangible reality of an empty tomb of Jesus is for us a far greater pledge of our certain hope even than that tangible tomb of hope in the cave of Ephraim in Canaan that Jacob had.

It gives us a better assurance than any of the gracious and merciful tokens of assurance that God gave to his saints of all in that grave in the many washings and cleansings and sacrifices of the temple, the sacrifices and washings of animals and their blood that proclaimed real forgiveness of sins.

Those sprinklings did promise and assure his people then of a certain hope. But how much more, says the writer to the Hebrews, how much more will the blood of Christ, which has now been shed forever, how much more will that purify our consciences from dead works to serve the living God?

Jacob's solemn command is proof of his certain expectation and of his comforting assurance in the pledge that God had given him to possess.

And possess it he did by faith. But how much more have we on this side of the cross of Christ, on this side of his great death and burial and resurrection, a great assurance and a certain hope.

[24 : 54] It's his grave that takes the terror from our grave. It's his death and his resurrection that gilds the bed of our death with light as we've sung. So if we want to live and die well friends like Jacob, let's encourage one another to keep our eyes fixed on the death and the burial with Jesus that is ours by faith.

His cross takes our guilt away. It holds our fainting spirit up. It cheers with hope the gloomy day and sweetens every bitter cup.

That's what Jacob's solemn command points to ultimately. Well, I want to look at two more things much more briefly that we shouldn't miss in this passage as well as Jacob's solemn command.

Firstly, in verses 1 to 13 of chapter 50, the splendid cortege of Jacob's funeral that speaks of a coming exodus and that reminds us that God's people are part of a far greater purpose for the whole world.

Verses 1 and 2 describe a very real and personal grief, don't they? Joseph wept for his father. Jacob was very old, well over 100, and his passing was hardly unexpected.

[26 : 25] But, you know, losing a loved one, especially a close loved one, especially a parent, is always painful, isn't it? It doesn't matter how old the person is. There's a very real human scene that we have here.

And it reminds us, and we shouldn't forget, the tenderness and the nearness of the Lord in our times of grief. It is Joseph who is there to close the eyes of Jacob and to attend to his death and his burial, just as God had promised Jacob.

Remember how important that was to him. Don't miss that detail. God knows and cares about the things that mean so much to us, personally and emotionally, about our loved ones, especially in time of death.

It's a personal grief. There's the embalming, a big, big thing for the Egyptians that reflected their belief in some kind of afterlife, although they were very confused, of course, about it.

But it's a point, again, worth noting, isn't it, that most people, deep down, indeed I think probably all people, do know that there's more to life than just the brief mortality of these earthly bodies.

- [27 : 42] People talk about their loved ones, don't they, as being somewhere. They're still sensing that they are alive in some way. Even the most hardened atheists, it's interesting, isn't it?
- They're often very concerned with leaving a legacy, leaving some meaning about their lives in this world, as though somehow something about them, their essential essence, will live on and have some sort of significance.
- They're saying, aren't they, that their life is more than just a bunch of atoms that will go back to dust. Everybody knows that deep down. But Joseph isn't indulging in Egyptian religion in this embalming.
- Maybe it's significant in verse 2 that he tells us that it was his physicians who did the embalming rather than the priests and the magicians whose job it would normally be. Maybe he's distancing himself from that.
- But at any rate, the purpose of Jacob being embalmed is certainly not to seek immortality through Egyptian religion, but simply so that his body can be carried away out of Egypt and taken to the one place where life was to be found, truly, beyond the grave, in the bodily hope of life with the covenant God.
- [29 : 00] But as we can see in this passage, the personal grief is only a part of it. The nature of Jacob's funeral shows us it was to be a very public witness and indeed a prophetic witness.
- Remember who Moses is first writing for. He's writing for the Exodus generation who had gone up out of Egypt, who were journeying to Canaan once more to possess the land themselves.
- Well, I think that in the events that Moses has chosen to record here, and indeed even in the language he uses, he intends to show that God was foreshadowing in this journey greater things of an Exodus to come for Jacob's seed for the Israelites.
- His funeral is prophetic of a coming greater Exodus that they now knew had been fulfilled in their own lifetime. The language uses very strikingly from the Exodus.
- I try to draw your attention to it. Verse 6 where it says go up, that's the term that's used constantly in the Exodus, going up out of Egypt. And it's repeated here again and again.
- [30 : 06] Verse 7, so Joseph went up. And many of the other terms are those that pepper the account of the Exodus, flocks and herds and chariots and horsemen and a very great company going up.
- Moses readers would cotton on to that immediately. And the root very probably mirrors the root that was taken by the children of Israel under Moses.
- You see, it's as if God is saying through Moses to Moses people, don't you see? This is God's pattern. This is how he works. He's in control.
- He knows what he's doing in your life just as he knew what he was doing then. Moses' people, of course, were looking back on it. They would easily see the pattern of God's working.
- And what encouragement it would be to them, just as it's an encouragement to us, is it not? When we read in Scripture about how God works through his people, we recognize the same patterns of things happening in our own experience.
- [31 : 07] That's why we have all these Old Testament Scriptures, Paul says. But through the encouragement of these Scriptures, we might have hope as we see that the same God is at work today. And life seems like a struggle to us when our life and our Christian witness is hard.
- It's wonderful, isn't it, to open our Bibles and see that God did work his purposes out then with his people again and again and again. When we see these same patterns in our own lives, we're reassured that he's still working out his purpose.

And we see, don't we then, that we too, that we are part of a much, much bigger story about what God is doing in this whole world.

But even to Jacob's family at this very time, surely the very splendor of Jacob's funeral must have reminded them that they were part of something far bigger than just their own family and their own domestic concerns.

Surely confirmed to them God's promise to bless them with a homeland and that a day would come for their own exodus back to Canaan. But also, surely it must have spoken to them of something more because Jacob's funeral also seems prophetic of another dimension of God's covenant promise.

[32 : 35] There would be a great empire and a great ruler from Israel to bless the nations and to indeed rule over the nations. Jacob's funeral is evidently a royal funeral.

He's mourned, isn't he, like a great king, 70 days, as though he were a pharaoh who was mourned for 72 days apparently.

And he's a king who receives homage from the whole world in his death, uniting the family of Israel with the Gentile rulers and peoples in his death.

Verse 7, all the leaders of Egypt are part of his cortege as well as all the house of Joseph and his brothers. And there's a recognition too from the surrounding nations of the great mourning of this company.

Verse 11 of chapter 50, the Canaanites are so struck by what's going on, they even name a place after this event. It's a glimpse, isn't it, of what the psalmist sang of, the princes of the peoples gathering as the people of the God of Abraham.

[33 : 50] A foreshadowing of the true Israel, the Messiah, exalted as a king in his death. And yet to arise, says Isaiah, that he might sprinkle many nations at last, bringing the blessing of the promise of God through Abraham to all the families of the earth.

Derek Kidner is surely right when he says that Jacob's family, with its attendant company of Gentiles, rehearses, so to speak, in miniature and in minor, rehearses the ultimate homecoming of his sons, one day to be escorted to their inheritance from all the nations, upon horses and in chariots, as we read in Isaiah chapter 66.

Did Jacob's sons fully understand and see all of that way back then? Well, no, of course not, but in that level of detail and clarity.

But they could hardly not be struck, could they, by the fact that their humble family were surely caught up in something far bigger, far greater. The promised covenant purpose of God that he had revealed to them would be fulfilled through the seed of Abraham.

Even the Egyptians sensed that here was something special. They joined the great cortege. Even the Canaanites saw something very special, something very sacred was happening.

[35 : 26] You see, Jacob's funeral was a public witness, a prophetic witness. It pointed far beyond just Jacob and his own family, pointed to the great plan and purpose of God for the whole world.

And hence, as John Calvin says, it came to pass that the knowledge of the covenant of the Lord flourished afresh among them all, among the people of faith and overflowing to the peoples of the world.

God's love. What a great thing, isn't it, when the lives of God's servants, even in their death, even in their funerals, and they're prophetic like that, when the knowledge of the covenant gospel flourishes, because everything about them points beyond just them, points to the grandeur and the wonder and the glory of God's great purpose for the whole world.

I recall some years ago being at the funeral of a childhood friend, a boy who was just a few years older than me, that we spent many, many holidays together with as youngsters.

And he died in his early 30s of a brain tumor. He came from a Christian family, a Christian home, but he and his brother, one of five children, he and his young brother had both rebelled and were far from the Lord.

[36 : 58] the rest of the family were serving the Lord and grieved over them. But he was converted just a year before he died, and I've rarely known anybody so turned around and changed in their life as he was.

He became a vibrant witness to Christ. Everybody had known his dissolute way of life, and everybody in that small town could see the change.

church. And at his funeral in a little church in the highlands, both his dearest friend and his youngest brother were both saved most wonderfully because in his life latterly and in his death, he pointed beyond himself to the greatness of the gospel of the glorious God who had reached down and saved him and touched him and given him life.

because in life and in death, they'd been conscious that everything pointed beyond, as it did with Jacob, to the coming of the great exodus from this world, to the coming of the great empire, the great king of Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Jacob's funeral was just the same public and prophetic witness as my friends.

It's wonderful, isn't it, when the most powerful evangelist at a gathering is the one who's lying there in the coffin and who in their own funeral, though being dead, yet they speak a public and prophetic word about the Savior.

[38 : 38] Friends, that is a great aim to have about your life. But as we close, what do we say about verse 14? after the grandeur of the funeral, with all its solemnity, all its hints at the great and wonderful things to come in the future, it's just back to normality in Egypt.

Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers. Past is the splendid cortege of Jacob's funeral. It seems such an anticlimax.

But this little verse does show us the story continuing. The story continuing with Jacob's family.

And a story that speaks of a continuing exile and reminds God's people, wherever they find themselves in that unfolding story, that we must have patience and endurance in the present.

Because that story is not over yet. You can imagine the family, can't you? Wondering why they can't just stay in Canaan. Why they have to go back to Egypt.

[39 : 53] But God's time was not yet for their great exodus. It was another 400 years to come, as God has revealed to Abraham. Not yet the time of their exodus.

Not yet. These, friends, are these not two of the hardest words to come to terms with in the whole of biblical theology. How long, O Lord?

That's the cry of the psalmists and the saints down the ages. Even it's the cry of the saints in glory around the throne who are likewise waiting for the great final exodus, the great resurrection, and the full salvation of our resurrection bodies that will only be ours and only be theirs when the Lord Jesus at last comes.

Don't we long for an end to our exile, for an end to this world's curse of sin, an end to sorrow, to wickedness, to famine, to violence, to mourning, an end to death itself.

So hard, isn't it, to know what God has promised but to just have to go on in the not yet. where illness still strikes, where death still robs us, where disappointments galore still stalk us day by day.

[41 : 17] This little verse is just a reminder the story wasn't over yet. There was much, much grace and mercy still to unfold in this family and through this family for the world, for Egypt, and for other nations besides.

the time of their exodus from Egypt did come. Moses' people knew that. And it's a reminder to us too, God's story isn't over even now.

Not yet. And when all the things we long to see aren't in our possession now, it doesn't mean God has forgotten us. It doesn't mean God isn't powerful.

It just means, as Peter tells us, that he is patient, that he is merciful, that he desires that none should perish, that all should reach repentance.

It just means that he still has much, much work for his people to do in this world and all over this world. It means, friends, that we too are called, like Jacob, to point beyond our story to the great story, to the everlasting story of God's covenant of life through the Christ of promise.

[42 : 39] He is patient. And so we also need to be patient and prophetic always, pointing others to what he has shown us, his great purpose for this world and for all who will be his people, and leading them to the great possession, the only true comfort in life and death, the only pledge of a good conscience before God on that great day.

It's found in a burial place. It's found at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. For everyone who has been buried with him, who has been united with him in a death like his, shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

This is the gospel of Moses, the servant of God. This is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, how we thank you for the pledge that we have in life of the dying and the burying and the rising of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How we praise you for that empty tomb which assures us of a sure and certain hope that is ours in him. Amen. So help us, like Jacob, to our dying day to be fixed in mind and heart on that burying place, that it should be our burying place, that we might know the life that is eternal with you.

[44 : 32] Amen.