

Mystery and Victory

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[0 : 00] Good morning, Watermark. That's exactly how I felt this morning, very cold. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Graham.

My ■■ means gum, so you can call me me gum in Chinese today. I'm married to Irina, my better half, and we have two children, Elijah, who's five, and Daniela, who's two.

Now, there's one thing that we do as a family which is either considered incredibly brave or incredibly stupid, and that is we make a trip to Toys R Us.

Now, if you're a parent, you understand how brave or stupid that experience can be. So, anyway, for my five-year-old, the other day I said to him, we're going to Toys R Us, and his face lit up with excitement.

You know, for me, I'm thinking he's going into a den of lions, and he's just, this is joy, this is Disneyland on steroids, we're going to Toys R Us. And then I said to him, but we're going to buy a gift for someone else, because we were going to a birthday party.

[1 : 15] And his face just dropped. It was this actual idea, why would we even do that? Why would we even think about someone else, right?

And that is really kind of what happens to us when we come into the family of God, the kingdom of God, right? It's Jesus comes along with this radical message, and he changes us so much that we not only begin to think of ourselves, that over time we start thinking about others and their needs, right?

And that's exactly what happened. This trip in Toys R Us, we're walking along, and everything about him at first is, is I want that, I want that, and I didn't even know I wanted that, but I want it. And then he began to change, and I said, okay, you really need to think about your friend, right? What is he like? And he began to change, and eventually when it came time to actually give the gift, he was really excited to see what he would think of the gift he had chosen, which was a Star Wars something or other, by the way.

But if we think about it in terms of us, Jesus comes in and he says to us, he says, I want you to go out and make disciples of all nations.

[2 : 31] Now, he didn't say, I want you to go out and make converts. He said, I want you to go out and make disciples. Now, to make a disciple is a lot harder than making a convert.

It means a lifetime of walking, of crying together, sharing your life together, to be known by someone, to know other people.

And at Watermark, that is one of our really founding and guiding principles. We exist because it is our desire as a church, and we believe it is something that Jesus has placed on us, to help people grow, help them in their next step on their spiritual journey, right?

Wherever you may be, we want you to grow. And how you do that is by having people in your life, people who know you, love you, care for you, want the best for you, and you yourself are there to know other people, love other people, and give to other people.

So we do that primarily through community groups. We do it on a big day like this where we all get together and celebrate. But it's also our desire that it's not just something that happens here.

[3 : 45] We have a burning desire, God willing, to plant churches, right? Other little communities of the kingdom in Hong Kong and hopefully in other countries around the world.

And that doesn't happen unless we're investing in people. We're training people, we're spending time with pastors and leaders and helping them grow and see how God's gifted them.

So one of those is the Mandarin ministry, right? So we're going to have a first at Watermark today, not just the coldest day, but it's going to be the first time we have a sermon in Mandarin.

day has just passed as though they've lost another day now some people think wow I've lived another day

I just gained one more day but when we do stop and ponder death sometimes we do think we are so small our lives are so small and when we focus on ourselves suddenly we find we don't have much hope we can work really hard but it seems like it may all be in vain but thanks be to our Lord Jesus Christ he's rose from the dead and he's given us an eternal hope so all our labor doesn't have to be in vain so all our labor doesn't have to be in vain actually for myself

I was once in a zombie-like state in the time in the time I don't know if any of you have experienced death of someone very close to you in the time in the time my mother and my sister just went to the dead actually when I was quite young both my mother and sister passed away at that time I had a deep experience a deep taste of death I had such a warm embrace with them and then suddenly it's cold to the touch physically they're so close to you but actually they're so far away and my whole world became very dark you know when you're so close to death suddenly you think that everything you're working for no matter how much money you have no matter what you've accomplished it doesn't mean very much in that moment so when I was reading the book of Ecclesiastes

I resonated with it saying meaningless, meaningless everything is meaningless but then I came to know Christ and I discovered there can be great meaning in life He was crucified and then He rose from the dead and He's given us a new hope in life after I experienced death I waxed philosophical I thought you know seven billion people in this world and they're all just plunging to their deaths as though there's this huge gate which is death and it's swallowing up everybody what hope was there what hope was there in that but the Lord Jesus Christ

[17 : 03] He has opened up a new door this is a door of life so we can see and we have hope and all of our labor in the Lord Jesus Christ is not in vain I don't know if people feel afraid if we're talking about death up here but only in Jesus Christ you can have victory when you think about death Everyone who dies in Jesus Christ we know they are just sleeping Actually last year

I experienced another loss but it brought greater richness to my life I had an American teacher and mentor He spent many years in China going from city to city preaching the gospel and training up leaders This American finally passed away in the city of Xi'an As we thought back over his life we thought of so many lives he touched so many people whose lives were transformed because of this man's teaching and ministry in his life in his life in his life in his life in his life in his life in his life people■■ the people■■ the people they■■ the people■■ the people■■ of his and when we thought about his life actually we didn't even think that much about him but we saw Jesus Christ in his life when he was still living a friend of his had cancer He asked his friends when you found out that you had cancer how did you respond how did you feel His friends said actually at that moment I felt that I came to a new understanding of life You suddenly realize what is important and what is not important You know you should do and you know where your priorities should lie What things have eternal value and what things do not

I don't know what difficulties everyone is encountering in their own lives There could be difficulties at work or just different burdens in your personal lives For students obviously your studies your GPAs In this world actually when we focus on ourselves often we lose hope You don't know this whole thing and we don't know if everything is just random and when we measure it by death then we think what is the value of all that we do says that that those who are in Christ that they are sleeping

People in this world we see someone and we think oh he's dead but for Christians we think he's sleeping because Jesus says he who believes in everyone who believes with me even if he dies he will live he will rise from the dead But our current bodies cannot receive the imperishable One day when Christ comes again we'll all be changed In the twinkling of an eye in a moment Everyone we shall all be changed The dead will rise

[22 : 39] And we'll receive a new body that Christ has prepared for us This is a glorious body Not a perishable body This perishable body will put on the imperishable When we talked about there's a door of death and it's swallowing up so many people Swallowing up so many souls How do we feel about this?

Do we feel compassion toward all Do we feel pity toward all these people Or do we think oh well that's just how it goes Do you perhaps feel a sense of urgency as though you see there's a building on fire and you think oh how can we save the people in it?

Actually every Christian has a responsibility We should awaken those who are sleeping and help them to see what is the true state that they are in and bring them into an eternal kingdom Before I came to know the Lord Jesus Actually I changed a lot and I didn't even realize it after I accepted Christ A friend suddenly said to me Do you know you're very different from before?

He said you smile now You never smiled before But now you smile And I think of a Christian I once knew When I was attracted to this person's smile Because that smile It was a feeling that was a joy This smile came out of a joy that was bubbling out of this person's heart That was from the world This is not a happiness that you just see around you in the world I didn't see this on anybody else's face And I wondered how can this person have this joy And then I came to know Oh, it's because he's a Christian

He has a vibrant hope in the Lord Jesus Christ There's nothing that he would be afraid of Here Paul says Oh, death where is your sting?

[26 : 11] Oh, death where is your victory? The sting of death is sin And the power of sin is the law Sometimes people say Oh, death that's caused by Satan But actually we know that death is a result of sin because we have all sinned and offended God We owe a huge debt to God And a great function of the law is it shows us that we are sinners But through the Lord Jesus Christ We have hope because he has fulfilled the law

And we don't need to face eternal judgment He's life He's also brought to us and as the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead His life gives our lives hope So we ask ourselves a question Am I living? I'm in the Lord I'm in the Lord And who am I living for? I'm in the Lord I'm in the Lord I'm in the Lord I'm in the Lord I'm in the Lord I'm in the Lord Are my hopes in this temporal life or do I have an eternal hope?

Paul reminds us here He says You must be steadfast immovable What does it mean to be steadfast immovable?

And in what situation would you be steadfast and immovable? In 1 Corinthians 15 verse 1 it tells us that we need to be steadfast in the gospel The gospel is that the Lord Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and gives us a hope in our lives today We can't for ourselves We can't for ourselves We can't for ourselves We can't for the Lord Some people feel life is hard In fact, it's too hard And they cry out to God Why do I have to go through so much?

[29 : 15] This makes me think of a sculptor an artist He sees a piece of granite And then he goes and he chisels at it And then slowly you see a shape emerge And then he continues to chisel piece by piece Now if this piece of granite had fillings Every time he goes at it with that chisel and hammer it hurts But actually every time he feels like he's losing something he is gaining something He's gaining a new shape a new form

It hurts It hurts And this is also something that God is doing in our lives Every time we're going through a difficulty a heartbreak God is changing us He wants to use us He wants to change our heart of stone And give us a heart like the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ Paul exhorts us have the same heart that is in Christ Jesus that the same mind And the apostle Paul also says Today It is not I who live but Christ lives in me And here

Paul exhorts us Be steadfast Immovable Now what does it mean to be steadfast or immovable Actually in the NIV translation it says stand firm We see and they stand up And they stand back up again And this is what it means to stand firm

There is a story Actually there is another story It is about a Soviet spy It is about a Soviet spy He was captured in the US He was captured in the US and he was interrogated by the CIA And he was interrogated by the CIA And you know that America is a very rule of law kind of a country.

And so they arranged a lawyer to defend him. Now, actually, this lawyer wasn't even a criminal defense lawyer.

[33 : 16] He was an insurance lawyer. And so everyone knew what the outcome was going to be of this court case. When this lawyer saw the Soviet spy, he said, Do you know what is going to happen to you?

You are probably going to be electrocuted. Yes. But there didn't seem to be any response in the Soviet spy.

So he asked him, Aren't you afraid? And the spy replied, How does that help to be afraid?

And this lawyer, he poured himself out and really tried to defend the spy.

But everyone, the entire American public, wanted to electrocute him. So he said, And one day, when the lawyer was asking questions of the Soviet spy, he was standing there.

[34 : 46] And it reminded the Soviet spy of someone. He said, You're a standing man. And so the lawyer said, What are you talking about?

What do you mean? And this is the case. And the Soviet spy said, You remind me of someone I saw when I was young.

He was a friend of my father's. He was a friend of my father's. He often came to our house. And every time he came, my father would say, Hey, you watch this man.

And so he would try to observe and watch this man. And he always tried to carefully observe and watch this man.

And he didn't see anything special about this man, this uncle. But one day, the border police came to their house.

[36 : 04] And they beat up his mom and dad. His dad's friend was over their house that day.

And so they beat him up too. And they beat him to the ground. But then he stood back up. And then so they beat him again, brutally.

After struggling, he stood back up. And they beat him again. And then he stood back up.

So they were still there. Finally, the guards, the police, they were very tired. And they saw something in this person's life.

That struck them. He wasn't someone who could be beat down. He's a standing man.

[37 : 12] They said, He's a standing man. In our lives, we can think, you know, what are the things that beat us down?

Is it your work? Is it your marriage? Is it your marriage? Is it something else? Is it your marriage? Of course. That's what we were thinking.

We were thinking, how are the last life? Now, some of you might be thinking, so what happened to the Soviet spy? Because this lawyer would not be beat down either, because he too was a standing man, there was one glimmer of hope.

So everyone was saying, to the electric chair with the Soviet spy, the American lawyer was trying to figure out every way to save his life.

This lawyer went to the judge's home. One night, the lawyer went to the judge's home. The judge had already decided that this man would be receiving the death penalty.

[38 : 41] But the lawyer said to the judge, He's just trying to do his job.

From a human perspective, why are we trying to kill him?

We can imagine, if there's a day that our friend's friend's hand is in his hand. Now, consider this.

What if one day, our U.S. spy falls in the hands of the Soviets?

Actually, this man has greater value to us alive. Who knows if one day our spy falls into their hands, then we can do an exchange.

Nice speech. So the judge, he listened to everything the lawyer said and said, nice speech.

[39 : 50] And actually, he sentenced the man to life imprisonment instead of the death penalty.

Actually, we're all like that.

We're all like that. We're all like that. We're all like that. We're all like that. We're all like that. We're all like that. Now, an analogy is that in heaven, we too have a lawyer and advocate who is pleading for us. Because of a standing man.

But we know that our Lord Jesus Christ is not only a standing man. But not only is our Lord Jesus Christ a standing man, He has actually risen from the dead.

He is a resurrected man. And he is now standing at the right hand of God our Father, pleading for our lives.

So we don't know what we do in our lives. If we do in our lives, this is not going to be in vain. And in our lives, all that we do for the Lord is not going to be in vain.

[40 : 56] We can also advocate for people around us in our lives. So they may also be able to receive the life.

That we can pray for them that they too will receive life. In our lives, we obviously all go through many struggles.

There may be internal struggles. There may be external hardships. There may be external hardships. Actually, sometimes we're struggling all together.

Even brothers and sisters struggling in the church. Sometimes persecution from outside of a church. But we can gain the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ has already conquered death. And one day, He will gain a complete victory.

[42 : 02] The darkness of death will be completely overcome. We will see many big wars of war. Often in movies, we see grand landscapes of battles. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions of soldiers lined up with their spears and swords and shields.

And at that moment when the trumpet sounds, Everybody says, attack! And then we see a great victory.

One day, we will experience that as well. That victory in the war, you can see that many people died. Obviously, on a battlefield, you see that many people are losing their lives, are dying.

But in that last day, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes, we see people rising from the dead.

[43 : 13] And he comes to give us an imperishable life. And this body will be our resurrected body.

So, what are we living for today? Are we just wasting our lives away?

No, let's live for Christ. We are still in the same place. And can we be steadfast, immovable? And do the meaningful things in each of our lives.

Things that have eternal value. You know, many brothers and sisters, we said, they go to the gym.

They work that six-pack or eight-pack. But if you're, you know, looking at death, there's no hope in that. But Paul says, many things, everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial.

[44 : 34] But maybe you can go to the gym with brothers and sisters and fellowship and have eternal value in that.

And sisters too.

You can do things together with your other sisters. Even to strangers, we can be friendly to them.

We can share the gospel with them. That people will become your friends. We can even experience strangers becoming friends. And from friends to family.

And this is the great family of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you're serving in your community groups.

[45 : 48] Stand firm. Be steadfast. Immoveable. Love those around you. Bring that joy.

Live it out. And others will be able to see something different and see our Lord Jesus Christ.

Knowing that in the Lord, your labor is not in vain.

No matter how hard life sometimes gets. You are that standing man. Nothing will beat you down.

Thank you. That's the next message.

Let's pray. Let's thank you. Let's bow in prayer. Our dear Heavenly Father. Your kingdom is forever.

We are all unworthy. But you have promised to raise us from the dead. You've given us.

[47 : 01] You've preached to us this gospel. So we can gain such a wonderful life. God, help us to live a life that reflects the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must be faithful. We must be faithful. We must be faithful. We must be faithful. We must be faithful. And to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

We must be faithful. Knowing that in the Lord, our labor is not in vain. We must be faithful. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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

Amen. Amen. Amen.

[48 : 08] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.