

Arriving Home, Forever

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 April 2024

Preacher: Kevin Murphy

- [0 : 0 0] The reading this morning comes from Revelations chapters 21 and 22, various verses. You can follow along in your bulletin or in the screen behind me.
- In chapter 21, verse 1, we read, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.
- And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
- And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people.
- And God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more.
- [1 : 0 6] Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore. For the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new.
- Also, he said, write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true. And he said to me, it is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.
- To the thirsty, I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God, and he will be my son.
- But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.
- Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.
- [2 : 2 8] And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.
- Its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates, twelve angels.
- And on the gates, the names of the twelve tribes of the Son of Israel were inscribed. On the east, three gates. On the north, three gates. On the south, three gates.
- And on the west, three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations. And on them were the twelve names of the apostles of the Lamb.
- And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width.
- [3 : 3 4] And he measured the city with his rod twelve thousand stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. And I saw no temple in the city.
- For its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. And the city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it.

For the glory of God gives it light. And its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk. And the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

And its gates will never be shut by day. And there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.

But nothing unclean will ever enter it. Nor anyone who does what is detestable or false. But only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

[4 : 37] And in chapter 22, Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city.

Also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for healing of the nations.

No longer will there be anything accursed. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it. And his servants will worship him.

They will see his face. And his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun.

For the Lord God will be their light. And they will reign forever and ever. And he said to me, These words are trustworthy and true.

[5 : 47] And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angels to show his servants what must soon take place.

And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. Yeah.

Thank you. This is the word of God. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Okay. Okay. I'm sure we will get this right.

Sorry, Ange, I cut you short. I think there was a miscommunication on my side that it was longer than we were meant to read. So we can call it there. Okay. Let me pray for us.

And then we're going to look at this passage. Heavenly Father, this morning, we live in a broken world. All of us come here, 100% of us, with something on our heart, Lord.

[6 : 53] Whether it's something that's happened in the past or something that we anticipate in the future, something that's heavy. God, we need to meet with you. We want your word to speak to us, to encourage us.

Lord Jesus Christ, come and be with us today. And let your word come alive to our hearts. I pray this in your wonderful and gracious name. Amen. Amen. Okay.

Let me ask you a question. And the question is this. If you could describe your perfect life, how would your perfect life look like?

I know the youth are with us today. High schoolers. High schoolers. Youth. If you could describe your dream life, paradise, what would that life look like? You can think about that for a minute.

If you are new to Watermark, we are, for the last four months, we've been doing this preaching series called The Wonderful Work of God. And we've been working through the storyline of the Bible.

[7 : 49] If you're new to Watermark, we often think that the Bible is just a collection of wise sayings or a collection of random things that tell us about God. But actually, the Bible is a story.

It has a storyline. In order to make sense of the Bible, you need to make sense of the storyline. And so we've been doing that for about four months. And today is the final sermon in the series.

You may be saying, okay, finally, we're getting to the end. And so if you're new with us today, I hope it makes sense. Let me recap the story for us. I'll try to do it briefly, and then we're going to dive in.

The story starts in Genesis 1 and 2, the very first pages of your Bible. And it starts off where God makes humanity. He makes humanity distinctive, unique, different from all the other creatures.

What is distinctive about humanity? It's the fact that we're made in God's image, and we are made to have relationship with God. We're meant to live with God.

[8 : 51] Not next to God, not above God, not beside Him. With Him. And God makes us to be in deep intimacy and oneness. To know Him and enjoy Him.

To experience life with Him. However, it isn't long in the storyline that things go horribly wrong. Page number three, everything falls apart. And humanity rejects God's rule.

We rebel against Him. And in a sense, in that time, sin enters the world. And when sin enters the world, death enters the world. Physical death, people die.

But even more so, a spiritual death, an existential death, enters all of the world and all of our hearts. I don't know if you've ever spoken to somebody or interacted with somebody that's gone through a deeply traumatic, a horrific experience.

Maybe they've come back from the front lines of a war zone. And you might say, it's like talking to a ghost. The person has become a shell of what they once were. Something inside of them has died.

[9 : 54] It's still the same person, but they're not the same person. That's what happened to humanity. It's what happened to our world. Something inside of us died. Our relationship with God died.

That's what sin does. But, from that very moment, from page number three, God makes a promise. And he makes a promise that he is going to put right all that is broken and wrong and painful and destructive with this world.

God is going to reverse the curse of sin. He's going to reverse death. God is going to put things right. And he's going to reconcile us, God and man, together.

Where we meant to live together, but now there's friction and fighting and conflict. God is going to reunite us. And so God makes these promises. First to Abraham, then to Adam, then Abraham, then Moses.

And all throughout the Bible, he makes these promises. We call them covenants. To David and Solomon and Isaiah and Jeremiah. And makes these promises that he is going to put the world right again.

[10 : 57] And this is the wonderful work of God. This is what the whole story is all about. How God is going to put it right. And so, he starts off with this little group of people, Israel.

And he blesses them. And then he gives them a king so that they will know what does it look like to live under a king and experience his blessing. And then he gives them a temple so that they'll know what is it like to live with God's presence in their midst.

And God goes on making these promises. And of course, Jesus comes and is, in one sense, the fulfillment of all these promises. Jesus is the true king.

Jesus is the true temple. Jesus is the one who starts to put things right again. And he does it because he deals with sin on the cross. That's the cause.

And he starts to deal with the consequences of sin by making life better. But when Jesus dies and rises again, his disciples say, okay, let heaven come.

[11 : 56] You've done it. Now let the good times roll. And Jesus says, not yet, just wait. There's work to be done. Heaven is not going to come just yet. There's work to be done. What is the work to be done?

He says, there are many, many people throughout the world that don't know me. Don't know the gospel. Don't know Jesus. I want you to go and tell them and let them know they too can be reconciled with God.

And so Jesus sends out his disciples, sends us out to live on mission. And so that's where we're at in the storyline of the Bible. And we're about to come to the end, but we're not quite there. So that's where we're at in the storyline of the Bible.

But it's also where we're at in the history of the world. Because that's where we're at. Jesus has come. He's died. He's risen. He sent us out. Two questions for us.

One, how does the story end? Two, how should we live life now in light of how the story ends? Okay, so that's what we're going to look at today.

[12 : 53] Let's look at the first one. How does the story end? The last book of the Bible that Antony read to us is called Revelation. It's a wonderful book of the Bible. Many people are scared.

Don't be scared. I encourage you to read it. It's full of lots of strange imagery and pictures and illustrations. Most of these are not meant to be taken literally.

And the book of Revelation, the whole book doesn't tell us how the story ends. It's written to encourage Christians who are going through a hard time to keep on going, to persevere.

It's the story of the world. But right at the end of Revelation, God tells us how the story ends. And let's look at what he says, verse 21. Maybe as we look there, just a question.

What do you think heaven is going to be like? I know Neil spoke about this a few weeks ago. We often think that heaven is going to be clouds and angels and harps and stairways made of heaven.

[13 : 52] Sorry, stairways made of clouds. But Revelation tells us something different. And John here uses a couple of pictures, imagery, to describe, to try and describe what it's going to be like.

And his main point is this. One of his main points is heaven is going to be a new creation. A new creation. A new creation. A brand new created world. A physical world.

Look at what he says here. Look at verse 1 with me. He says, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And the sea was no more.

Verse 4. At the end he says, And for the former things have passed away. Now, the apostle John, who wrote the book of Revelation, He is telling us that the storyline of the Bible and the storyline of the world ends with a new creation.

In a sense, the story doesn't end. It gets reborn and starts again. It's what he calls a new heaven and a new earth. So this created world is not going to burn up when it collides with the sun.

[15 : 00] It's not going to end when an asteroid hits the earth and we decimate. Christ is going to come and he's going to recreate a new creation.

He's going to take this world and renew it, reform it, transform it. Think about this. I don't know if you've ever seen those TV shows where somebody takes an old house and they renew it.

Right? They renovate it. And then they show you the pictures at the end. The before photo and the after photo. And it looks like a completely different house. In some senses it is. But it's also the old house that's been made new.

In some sense, that's what God is going to do. He's going to take his creation. He's going to so renew it. It's going to look and feel completely different. And yet it's going to be, in some ways, the same.

Heaven is not some distant place up in the sky made of clouds and harps. It's going to be a physical world, much like our own, yet altogether new. Look at verse 5 with me.

[16 : 01] It says, He who is seated on the throne, that's God, said, Behold, I am making all things new. In some senses it's going to feel and look a lot like the Garden of Eden.

And yet it's going to be much better. I don't know if you saw this in chapter 22, Angelina read to us. We won't look at it now. But in verses 1 to 5, it describes this new creation a lot like Eden.

It's a city, but there's rivers, and there's the tree of life, and there's trees and vegetation and plants. It looks a lot like Eden. Except these trees that bear fruit, these fruits are not going to curse the world.

They're going to heal the world. They're going to bring restoration, wholeness. It's going to be a new creation, a perfect world.

Now, you may ask the question, Okay, but in Genesis 1 and 2, there's this perfect creation. And then there was temptation. And sin came in and messed it all up. So how do we know that in the new creation, we're not going to do it again?

[17 : 04] If Adam and Eve had free will, and they could choose to rebel against God, how do we not know that in the new creation, we're just going to rebel against God and bring about the curse and the fall all over again?

Well, that's a great question. In chapter 20, just before this, God does something. He deals with Satan, and He judges him, He defeats him, and then He casts him away forever.

Look at the end of the first verse of verse 1. It says, I saw a new heaven, new earth, the first heaven and earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

In biblical imagery, the sea is a deep, dark, unknown place from which evil arises. So in Revelation 13, there's a sea, and the beast rises out of the sea.

In Job, remember, we spoke about it last year, Neil spoke about it, Leviathan rises out of the sea. But here, the sea is no more. That doesn't mean there won't be any beaches or water.

[18 : 06] The point is, Satan will be gone. There'll be no more temptation, no more evil, no more wickedness. And that's actually what it says.

Look at verse 4. Verse 4 says, He, that's God, will wipe away every tear from their eyes, death will be no more, nor shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, the former things will pass away.

Friends, in that new creation, the new world to come, there will be no more sadness, no more tears, no more cancer, no more relational conflict, no more bitterness, no more unforgiveness, no more earthquakes, no more depression, no more anxiety, no more panic attacks, no more war, no more injustice, no more abuse, no more sin, will ever exist.

There's this beautiful paragraph, at the end of the Lord of the Rings, where, Samwise Gangry, wakes up, and he says this, it says, at last Sam gasped, Gandalf, he said, I thought you were dead, but then, I guess I thought I myself was dead.

Is everything sad going to come untrue? What's happened to the world? And Gandalf replies, a great shadow has departed, said Gandalf, and then he laughed, and the sound was like music, or like water in a parched land.

[19 : 39] And as he listened, the thought came to Sam, that he had not heard such laughter, the sound of pure joy, for days upon days upon days, without count. Friends, that's what heaven is going to be like.

In this new creation, everything sad, everything broken, is going to come untrue. It's going to become non-existent. For the former things have passed away, behold, I am making all things new.

And the point is this, that throughout the Bible, from Genesis 3, all the way through thousands of pages, and stories, and ups and downs, and kings, and exile, and sin, and all sorts of rubbish, and pain, and heartache, God has been making promises.

This is not how the story ends. This is not how it ends. I will make all things new. Friends, the end of the story tells us, God will be true, and faithful, to his promises.

This began through Jesus, dying and rising again. And he will complete it fully, and finally, in the new creation. So, a new creation. But also, secondly, heaven is like a new city.

[20 : 48] Heaven's not going to be harps and clouds, or disembodied souls. So, what's it going to be like? What will we do? Well, you might think of, it's going to be unspoiled nature, the Garden of Eden, the best camping site in the world.

Actually, it's going to be a city. For those of us from Hong Kong, we like cities, right? That's why we live in this great city. We are going to win. Look at verse 2 with me.

It says, So, in some sense, the new creation is going to be a version of Eden, with rivers and trees and vegetation and glory and wonder.

But it's also going to resemble a city. Now, why does the Bible describe the new creation like a city? What's special about cities? Well, in the Bible, cities are primarily places of safety and refuge.

In the Old Testament, God dedicated these cities that if you were in danger, you could flee to them and you would be safe there. Cities are places where you're safe from bandits and enemies and wild animals and persecution.

[21 : 57] And so, cities in the old days had walls around them and they had gates and at night, they would close the city gates and you were safe in cities. It's a place of safety. Out there, it's dangerous. In the city, you're safe.

Cities are places of diversity of people. All sorts of different cultures and ethnicities come together and are unified and can accept one another. But cities are also places of culture making, innovation, productivity, work.

In some senses, think of the very best day you've ever had at work. Creation is going to be something like that but infinitely better.

Productive, exciting, wonderful, exhilarating. But think of how in the Old Testament in Genesis 11, the people come together to build a city, the Tower of Babel.

And they come together to build a city that they say, let us reach up to the heavens to meet God. And they build a city to the fame of their own name, to the greatness of their own name.

[22 : 59] And what does God do? He judges them and He scatters them. But here in Revelation, it's the inverse. Here, man is not building the city of man to God. God is bringing the city of God down to man.

And rather than scattering us, God is uniting all people, different languages and cultures and ethnicity. He's uniting them together around worship of the throne. But there's something unusual about the city and that is its shape.

This is the most unusual city you've ever seen. It has a very peculiar shape. Now, in the Old Testament, what is the center of all life?

Civic life, communal life, spiritual life? It's the temple, right? The temple is at the center of all civilization in the Old Testament. All the people camped around it. And the temple is where heaven and earth meet.

Where God comes and dwells with His people. I don't know if you know this, but in the Old Testament, the temple always faced eastwards. And the reason is because Adam and Eve were expelled out of the garden to the east.

[24 : 01] And so when the priests go back into the temple, it's like a symbol saying we're going back into Eden. We're returning to Eden to how we were meant to live. The temple is a picture of God coming to earth. And in the center of a temple, what is there?

There's a room. It's a cubic room. Two meters by two meters by two meters. It's called the holiest of holy places. No one can go in there except the priest once a year. In the holiest of holy places, God's presence dwells.

In this cubic room, this very small room in the center of the temple, in the center of life, in the center of the world. Look at how this city is described, verse 16.

It's a city, it's a thousand five hundred miles wide. Then it says, verse 16, its height, its length, its width are all equal. In other words, the city is a cube.

It's a replication of the most holy and sacred place on earth. In other words, what God is saying here is heaven is going to be like the center of the temple where God's presence dwells all over.

[25 : 02] No special places, no churches to go to, no special people, no pastors, no priests. The whole of all creation, the new creation, is going to be like the holiest, holiest places.

God himself is going to dwell there. Look at verse 22. It says, I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. Or verse 3, behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

He will dwell with him and they will be his people. God himself will be with him as their God. The point is, the most important thing about the new creation is that God is there in absolute, perfect splendor.

No hiding behind a veil, no going through a mediator, no special people, special buildings. God is there and we will know him perfectly and intimately. That's why the city is described not only as a city, not only as a temple, it's described as a bride.

Verse 2 says, the new Jerusalem came down as a bride, adorned for a husband. What do brides and bridegrooms do on their wedding days? They make a vow to each other. They make a commitment.

[26 : 12] With all that I am, with all that I have, I'm naked before you. I give myself to you. You belong to me and I belong to you. Friends, on that day, we will see the God of all creation, the one who created galaxies and stars and the universe, that God, we will see him almost naked in a sense, face to face and he will say, with all that I am, with all that I have, I give myself to you and you to me.

We'll be one with God. It's astounding. Friends, what do you think heaven is going to be like? This morning, we've only just scratched the surface, but the point is, heaven is going to be the final fulfillment and so much more of every promise God has ever made.

In the new creation, life will be as it's meant to be, even better than your dream life. Sin, death, corruption, no more and we will be with God.

Okay, second question is this, how then should we live now in light of that age to come? I remember hearing a story a few years ago of somebody that was a chartered accountant and when they were studying there for the exams, their accounting exams, they were extremely, extremely disciplined.

He would study for two hours and then he'd allow himself out of his bedroom for 15 minutes, okay, 15 minutes and then after that he'd go back to his room into his books and all his roommates and his friends and his housemates, they would be outside playing games, cooking, hot pots, watching videos, playing computer games and he would come out for 15 minutes and on the mark, okay guys, got to go back to the books.

[27 : 51] Extremely, extremely disciplined. Why did he do that? He had a vision, a vision of what was to come. He said, now I'll be disciplined because I'm going to pass these exams, I can have fun later.

How should we live now in light of the world to come? Let me give us four things to think about and I'm going to take them from 1 Peter, we didn't read it but it's on the back of your bulletin so grab your bulletin and look at 1 Peter with me.

1 Peter is a letter that's written by Peter to a bunch of Christians who are going through a hard time. How should we live now? Four things. Firstly, live as a sojourner. A sojourner.

Okay, what's a sojourner? It's a very strange word. A sojourner is somebody who is a traveler, a pilgrim. Somebody who is in transit, we might say in transit between now and your final destination.

Right? So these days you want to fly to America, you've got to stop off in Tokyo on the way and wait in the airport until your final destination. Friends, live this life as a pilgrim, a traveler, a sojourner knowing this life is not your final home.

[29 : 02] Look at how Peter writes it. Look at verse 1. He says, Peter, that's himself, as an apostle of Jesus, writing to those who are elect exiles. What's an exile? An exile is somebody who doesn't live in their home country.

They've had to leave their home country and they're living somewhere else. They're waiting to return. Friends, that's what the Christian life is. You're temporarily living in this world as we await Jesus to come to take us home to our final home.

In chapter 2, I'm friends, it's not in your bulletin, but Peter writes this. He says, Beloved, I urge you, live as sojourners and exiles in this world. Abstain from the passions of the flesh. In other words, don't give yourself to everything that you might feel like in this world because this isn't your home.

There's a home waiting for you and live now in light of that. So here's my encouragement to you. Live this life, high schoolers, if you're in youth, this, you've got dreams for your life.

Heaven is going to be infinitely better than your best dream for your life now. As you dream for your life, live now in light of the world to come. So, friends, live lightly.

[30 : 13] Don't hoard possessions. Don't be like Gollum in Lord of the Rings. My precious. Grab more and more and more, right? Friends, don't believe YOLO. You know, YOLO, you only live once.

No, you don't. You're going to live forever and ever and ever and it's going to be awesome. Friends, what would it look like to live this life now in light of the new creation?

See yourself as a pilgrim and a sojourner. Secondly, embrace suffering. Embrace suffering. Look at how Peter writes this, verse 6. He says, in this, what is this?

This is the hope of the new creation that's to come if you're in Christ. In this, you rejoice. Even though now for a little while you have necessarily been grieved by various trials so that the tested genuineness of your faith, your faith which is more precious than gold even though that perishes, your faith may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus.

Friends, if you are going to follow Jesus, suffering and hardship are probably going to be part of your life journey. In fact, if you're a human being that's going to be part of your life journey.

[31 : 26] But particularly if you're a Christian, if you're a Christian, suffering and hardship and difficulty are going to be your constant companion on this journey of life until the new creation.

And one of the reasons is God says that suffering refines us, it grows us, it matures us. Like when you put gold in a furnace and the gold bubbles up and all the impurities come to the top and you can remove the impurities so that what's left is pure.

So suffering and hardship and crises have a way of refining our character, our conduct, our heart so that we can purify us for God. But friends, there's a temptation to want to avoid all suffering and hardship in this life.

Nobody likes suffering. You don't need to seek it out. But when it comes, don't think it's the end of the world. Friends, don't avoid it. Suffering will come but suffering is preparing you for the world to come.

And so embrace it. Embrace the hardship of repentance. Embrace the hardship of humbling yourself to go and say sorry to somebody else. Embrace the hardship of sharing the gospel with somebody.

[32 : 35] Embrace the hardship of giving away some of your resources to some missionary in Myanmar or some kingdom adventure. Embrace the hardship of saying, this world isn't my own. I don't need to build my own castle here.

There's a will to come. Friends, this week you will face some difficulty. Let that difficulty refine you. Don't run away from it. Here's the third thing. Live on mission for Jesus.

I don't know if you know when you watch YouTube videos, you know, you want to watch a YouTube video and the first thing that always comes up is an irritating advert, right? Some skin care product that you're not interested in.

And at the bottom, on the bottom right hand corner, it says, skip this ad in five, four, three, two, one, right? That five second ad before the 10 minute YouTube video is like this world.

The 15 billion years of creation plus however many more is like the five seconds and there's a countdown clock that's ticking. Christ is coming soon in 5,000 years.

[33 : 37] Four, three, two, one. Jesus is coming soon. But friends, when he comes, there will be no more chance for us to repent. And there'll be no more chance for our loved ones to come to know him.

Friends, God is creating a new world, the real story of the world, but he's not going to force anybody to be there. Only those who love him now will love him there. And if you don't want God in your life now, if you say, no, I don't want you now, he's not going to force you to be with him for all eternity.

He will say, okay, fine, you do it your way. But friends, it is going to be infinitely terrible. And so friends, live on mission with Jesus.

And so there's two implications for this. The first one is this. Are you going to be in the new creation with him? In other words, are you a Christian? Do you love Jesus?

Have you centered your life around him? In the new creation, God is going to be the center of everything that happens. Is he the center of your life now? Have you surrendered to him? Have you accepted his offer of forgiveness, his offer of grace?

[34 : 46] Will you be with him there? But secondly, if you are a Christian, are you reaching out to people and telling people about him? Are you helping people to come to know the wonder of Christ and that we will live with him forever?

And then here's the last thing, live by faith. Live by faith. Look at what Peter writes here in verse eight. He says, though you have not seen him, you love him.

Though you do not now see him, he's talking about Jesus, you believe in him and rejoice with a joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. Friends, the point is, one day we will see Christ face to face and it will be infinitely better than you can imagine.

But right now, we don't see him. You don't hold him, you don't touch him. And so this week, live by faith. This week, when you're tempted to do things your own way, live by faith that Christ is enough.

This week, when you're tempted to sin, live by faith Jesus is enough. This week, when you're tempted to get angry and bitter and resentful towards somebody else, friends, live by faith. Reconcile, because that's what it's going to be like in heaven.

[35 : 51] At the moment, your relationship with Christ is one of faith, not sight. But one day, that's going to turn around. It's going to be sight, not faith. And so live this week by faith, knowing that he will bring you home safely.

Let me close with this. When we lived in South Africa many years ago, I know this might, let's see if you can connect to the story.

Our favorite place in the world to go on holiday was a place called Plettenberg Bay. Okay? And it was as close as you can get to paradise. It was on a stretch of road that's called the Garden Route.

It's about six hours away from Cape Town, 600 kilometers away. The Garden Route is called the Garden Route because it's like the Garden of Eden. And each kind of area on each side of Plettenberg Bay, one side is called Nature's Valley, the other side is called the Wilderness.

Right? So this is like Eden. And so once a year we'd try and drive there. So what we'd do, we'd young kids, we'd leave at three or four in the morning, maybe three in the morning. The kids could sleep in the car and we would drive to paradise, right?

[36 : 55] To Pletten. And invariably, we'd stop somewhere in the road, maybe eight o'clock in the morning, we'd stop for some coffee or some breakfast and about two hours outside of Pletten. And we'd stop and we'd get some coffee, to breakfast and then we'd get back in the car and go.

Friends, just imagine how ridiculous it would be if we stop at a gas station on the side of the road and you start pulling out your beach chairs and your beach umbrella and you bring out your suitcase and you start unpacking your clothes on the side of the road and you bring out your food and you start living as if that's holiday.

No, that's not holiday. We're just a traveler, just a pilgrim. This is a temporary stop on the way to paradise. Friends, this world is not your home. Don't live as if this world's your home.

There is creation coming, a new creation. It is going to be wonderful. Live life now as a pit stop, a short gas station stop on the way to glory.

Live with faith. Live trusting Jesus. Embrace the hardship but live knowing that Christ is going to make all things new. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning.

[38 : 03] God, I confess. I'll start with myself. I confess, God. I often live with such a small perspective that this world is everything. God, write on our hearts that we are pilgrims and travelers, sojourners in this world as we make our way towards our true home.

Lord, remind us that as wonderful as this city Hong Kong is and we want to work hard to make it even better. We want more joy and peace and grace and hope to fill our city. But God, help us remember this world will never be our home.

There is a new homecoming. And so help us to live with faith. Help us to trust you, Jesus. Help us to live as pilgrims. Help us, God, to love you and love one another as we live with hope for the world to come.

We pray this in your wonderful and gracious name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.