

The End of Days

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today.

Special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here. And we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it. And so that's why we come back week after week to see what God has to say to us in His Word, because we believe He has something to say to everyone.

He has something to say to people who've been Christians for a very short amount of time, maybe a few weeks or months. He has something to say to people who would consider themselves Christians their entire lives, and He also has something to say to people who would not consider themselves Christians.

God's Word is that powerful. And so we're turning again in our study in the book of Daniel. This is our last week. We've been in Daniel for several months now, and we come finally to the end of chapter 12.

[1 : 05] And you'll remember, as I've been telling you over and over, and I'll tell you one last time, the book of Daniel takes place in the 7th and 6th century B.C. It tells the story of a man named Daniel, who's a faithful Israelite living in exile in Babylon.

And the book has two basic points. First of all, it is meant to encourage us. No matter how bad things get, God is still in control. He rules and He reigns over the nations.

It's meant not just to encourage us, however, but also to instruct us how to live faithful lives in a foreign land. And it's with those two points that we come to the very end.

And by the way, I've also told you that Daniel himself gives us its own summary in Daniel 11, verse 32, that the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.

And so it's been our goal this whole time as we've gone through this book that we would know our God so that we would be able to stand firm and take action. And so as we come to the end, we're continuing the scene that began in chapter 10.

[2 : 08] Remember, chapter 10 and chapter 11, we were asking the same question. What do we do with our discouragement that comes from facing the evil that we see in this world?

You remember from chapter 10, Daniel was so overwhelmed that he fell down to the ground. He needed an angel to help him stand up again. And then in chapter 11, we saw the way that we as Christians can understand and view history so that it gives us perspective, so that we are able to stand up in the face of all the wickedness we see in the world around us.

As we're ending this scene and also ending the book, we're going to ask a similar but related question. We're going to ask a question about perseverance. How do we make it to the end? Not just how do we face the discouragement that comes from evil, but how do we keep walking in this life as Christians day after day, week after week, year after year, as we face so many things that challenge us in this world, as we see the pressure coming in on us, as we say no to pleasures and experiences that our culture offers, that they tell us we cannot live without, as we're told that the goal of life is to embrace independence and individualism, that sexual fulfillment and peak experiences are what it's all about, that independence and individualism are the end-all and be-all of life.

How do we persevere when believing what God tells us is right about this world results in us being called names? People think that we are bigots or we hate other people.

And in short, what I'm saying is this. Being a Christian is to be out of place in this world. And so, this is our simple question as we come to this final chapter.

[3 : 54] How do we make it to the end? What are the resources that God has given us that we would persevere? I invite you to turn with me now. We're in Daniel chapter 12. You can turn near the end of your worship guide.

You can turn in your Bible. You can turn in your phone. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's word. And God tells us that his word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold. And it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

And so, that's why we read now, starting at Daniel chapter 12, verse 1. And some to shame and everlasting contempt.

And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above. And those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book until the time of the end.

Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase. Verse 5. Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream.

[5 : 20] And someone said to the man clothed in linen who was above the waters of the stream, How long shall it be till the end of these wonders? Verse 7.

And I heard the man clothed in linen who was above the waters of the stream. He raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time.

And that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end, all these things would be finished. I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, O my Lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?

Verse 9. He said, Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined.

But the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand. And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days.

[6 : 29] Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days. But go your way till the end, and you shall rest and stand firm in your allotted place at the end of the days.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we thank you again that you have not abandoned us or left us alone as orphans in a merciless universe, but instead you have given us your word.

Lord, you've spoken to us in ways that we can understand so that we would know who you are and how we live in this world. We ask this morning that you would help us, that you would speak clearly to us by your spirit.

And we thank you that we don't have to earn or deserve any of these things, but instead we simply ask them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. In her second book, *Farmer Boy*, Laura Ingalls Wilder tells the story of her husband, Almanzo, when he was a boy growing up in upstate New York in the 1860s.

And she talks about when July 4th comes around for him and his family, they're very excited to go into town, and so they dress up in their Sunday best. Almanzo puts on his suit that he's typically only allowed to wear to church.

[7 : 53] They go into the town, and they take part in this parade that happens in the town square. And while he's there, Almanzo runs into some of his friends, and there's people selling lemonade there on that day, which, of course, that's what you do on July 4th, right?

And one of his friends comes up and buys a glass of lemonade with a nickel. And he tells Almanzo that his father gives him a nickel whenever he asks. Now, Almanzo, of course, wants lemonade as well, and he tells him, well, my father would do that too.

The only problem is his father has never done that before. In fact, his father only gives him a penny on Sundays to put into the offering plate. His friends keep goading him, though, knowing his father probably won't, and so he has to build up this courage to go and ask his father for a nickel to buy lemonade.

His father figures out what's going on in the situation. He says, look, I'm going to do you one better. I'm not just going to give you a nickel. I'm going to give you a half dollar.

But here's the thing. You can use that half dollar, and you can use it to go buy some lemonade, or I'm going to give you another idea. You can go and use that to actually just buy a pig.

[9 : 02] Now, if you buy a pig, that pig will have a litter of pigs, and you're going to be able to sell each of those pigs for \$4 or \$5. Now, I did the math here. Here, he's basically saying you can take this half dollar, and you can end up maybe making \$40 out of it.

So I'm going to give you 10 times more than you asked for. You just asked for a nickel, but I want you to think about it. Do you want to spend it on lemonade, or do you want to invest in something that will give you a return?

He said you do as you want. It's your money. So Almanzo has a choice, right? He can actually go and spend it on lemonade if he wants. Of course, as he thinks about it, right, this makes no sense to do that.

And so he ends up doing what his father suggests. He goes, and he finds himself a pig that day to buy. He calls it Lucy. And then we hear throughout the rest of the book about his adventures raising Lucy.

Of course, to do this, he has to be willing to sacrifice the present for the future. He has to be willing to persevere. He has to have what we might call delayed gratification.

[10 : 09] And so what does he have to do? He has to have something that motivates him. He has money, of course, that motivates him. He has potentially this \$40 that's waiting for him at the end. This relates to what we're talking about this morning, because our question is, what motivates us to continue and persevere in the Christian life?

What motivates us to have delayed gratification, to say no to things that are temporary and tempting for something that's greater and more beautiful in the future?

Now, you might think this is the exact same illustration I gave you last time. It is similar, but it is not. So last time we were talking about investments, and that was in terms of thinking about how history works.

Do we think in terms of a day or a decade? This is not so much about thinking about the working of history, but about delayed gratification. Almanzo gives up pleasures and experiences now for what he can gain and have in the future.

And so as we look at this chapter, we're ending with a final word about how we persevere until the end, how we hold on. As we do that, we're going to see three things. First of all, our suffering is limited.

[11 : 18] Suffering produces joy. Suffering ends in joy. Suffering is limited. Suffering produces joy. Suffering ends in joy.

First of all, suffering is limited. Look with me at verse 1. We find out there's going to be a time of trouble, and we see that this time of trouble is going to take place, verse 2, right before the end of the world, because it's happening right before the resurrection.

That's what verse 2 is telling us about. We're also told about this end time of trouble in verses 11 through 12, where we hear about this abomination that makes desolate. Now, this might sound a lot like what we've talked about before, the persecution that happened during the second century under Antiochus IV, when he came and desecrated the temple of God.

However, verse 2 helps us understand that this is talking about the time at the end of the world. Regardless of what position we take on this, the principles for us are the same when we think about suffering in the Christian life.

So we know there's this time of suffering, this time of trouble that's coming. It's indicative of what we talked about in the pattern of history from chapter 11, that we see suffering of the church, of God's people, over and over again.

[12 : 30] That is part of what we expect and anticipate as God's people until his return. And so the question here that's asked perhaps is the same question that you have. Verse 6, this angel asks, How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?

In other words, how long are we going to have to wait? How long will this suffering last? And we get an extremely clear answer in verse 7. We're told, and we all know what this means, it's going to be a time, times, and half a time.

I joke. Time, times, and half a time. Of course, you might feel like Daniel in chapter 8 who has trouble understanding what is meant by these times.

Well, we get some clarity for us in verse 11 where we're given an exact number of days, 1,290 days, which just happens to be 3.5 years.

Now, whatever view you take of these years, these days, it's been pointed out that at some point, you have to recognize that these are symbolic numbers, just like we've talked about in the past. [13:37] So I want you to think about it in this way. When we were in Daniel chapter 9, remember we talked about the fact that we had the 70 years, which was 10 times 7. 7 is this number of fulfillment or completion.

3.5 is, wait for it, half of 7. In other words, it's half of the number of completion. It's half of this full number, this complete number, which is a way of saying this suffering is going to be limited in time and scope.

It is not going to be as long as it could be. It's going to have an end to it, and we're comforted as we have been in earlier chapters by this precision. We see the exact number of days.

In other words, God has numbered down to the minute when the suffering of his people will end. It will not go on forever. God has set a limit to it.

There is a limit to suffering and persecution. Now, you might be thinking, thanks a lot, Matthew. This is the same thing you've been telling us throughout all of the book of Daniel. Why do we have to hear it again?

[14:42] And I would say, congratulations, you are a wonderful Western English-speaking person. Because it is a Western idea of thinking that we only need to hear something once.

When I was in seminary, one of the jobs that I had was working at a writing center where I would help other students with their papers. I cashed in on my English teacher experience. And one of my main jobs was to work with students who came from other countries.

English was not their primary language. And so they needed extra help writing their academic papers. Of course, I can't even imagine writing a paper in a second language. So I had nothing but respect for these students. And in my training for this, I had to read about what it's like to come from another country and encounter English writing.

Because in other cultures, they don't value precision in the same way that we do. Repetition is understood and expected. I have a big surprise for you.

The book of Daniel was not written in the West. Daniel didn't speak English. God, in his word, uses repetition to teach and emphasize things for us.

[15:46] He knows we need to hear things more than once. And so we know how important it is to God for us to know that he's limited the extent and time of suffering that he has numbered the very exact set of days because he is so sovereign and in control of this world.

He will not let his people suffer one more minute than he chooses. God has set a limit to suffering in this world.

And this is the same thing we talked about last time. There's a pattern to history. We see these things come and fall. So I'm going to give you some examples. The emperor Nero, one of the greatest persecutors of God's church in the first century in the Roman Empire, ruled for a grand total of 14 years.

Many of you, most of you, have lived longer than 14 years. He was there for a time. Then he was gone. When we were in the book of 1 Peter, I told you over and over about Corrie ten Boom, who was in a concentration camp during World War II for helping the Jews.

Now, if you think about it, you might think she was there for years and years, right? No, she was imprisoned in February of 1944. She was released in December. Less than a year. Okay?

[16:58] 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. In 2003, Saddam Hussein's statue was toppled. Richard Wurmbrand, who was famous for being persecuted for the gospel in Romania under communism, was imprisoned for only 14 years.

In other words, when we face suffering in this world, hold on. It is only for a moment. We need to have an eternal perspective as God's people.

14 years in the scope of someone's life is not that long. In the scope of eternity, it is even shorter. What we believe about the future determines the type of hope we have now.

When we face suffering, when we face persecution in this world, we know it is for a limited time.

God has numbered the days that it will last. It will not last for very long.

Long term, every Christian should be an optimist. God wins. God wins in temporary historical moments by bringing down evil rulers.

[18:06] God wins ultimately, fully, and finally in the future. Now, if you're a cynic, you might be thinking, yeah, that's great. It's also been 2,000 years since Jesus came, so it seems like maybe it's not that limited.

And I would remind you of this. First of all, we talked about this a lot in 1 and 2 Peter. Second of all, even if persecution is not limited in the way that you want it to be, your life is.

Every single one of you will die. You will not live 2,000 years. What we face in this world during our lives is limited by our humanity.

Psalms 144 tells us, Man is like a breath. His days are like a passing shadow. You will die sooner than you think.

And I tell you that not to be morbid, but to help us to live with an eternal perspective, to live with the end in mind. What we are going through now is short and temporary.

[19:09] So how do we persevere to the end? We persevere because we know that suffering is limited. God has set an end to it. Now, if that's all we knew, that might sound still pretty bad, right?

If that's all there is, then I'm just telling you, we're just gritting our teeth. We're just trying to make it through to the end. All we have to do is have our grip strength needs to be good enough that we can hang on. Thankfully, though, that's not the only word we receive here at the end in this chapter. It's not just that good comes after suffering and persecution. We find here that goodness comes in and through suffering and persecution.

Look with me at verse 6. Remember, it was the question of how long. We've answered that question. 3.5 years. Half of a full time. We have another question, though, in verse 8.

Daniel gets his chance to raise his hand. He says, I heard, but I did not understand. We can sympathize with him. He says, Oh, my Lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?

[20:11] So, okay. Thanks a lot for answering the question about the length. What's going to happen? Well, we get another answer. This one's actually clear. Verse 10. Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.

In other words, God's people will grow and change as a result of this. God is going to use suffering and persecution to purify and refine his people.

He is going to use it to make them more holy and more godly. He's going to use it to emphasize and highlight what really matters in this world. And so it's not just that we're gritting our teeth, right, saying, Well, this isn't going to last forever, but we are actually seeing real and beautiful things spring up in our lives here and now.

Many of you read Christ and the coronavirus about the many good things that God can do through a pandemic. I think we may still have copies in the lobby that are for free if you want one.

I'm going to give you some other ideas about some of the good things that come through suffering. These are some of the ways that God refines us in the midst of persecution. First of all, and we saw this during the coronavirus, people rediscover community.

[21:33] They rediscover how valuable human connection is in this world. They rediscover that it's really a beautiful and rare thing that we shouldn't take for granted, that we can actually gather together as people in the same room and worship God with one voice.

As people in the West, not only do we underestimate the power of repetition, we underestimate the power of community. And so suffering breaks the power of that, breaks the power of materialism, right?

Because we have less when things are hard. What do you want? Do you want to have nothing in this world, but be surrounded by others to have rich community, rich human connection?

Or do you want to be alone, surrounded by stuff and things? Do you want to have very little, but rich community? Or do you want to be alone and be rich in things?

Suffering clarifies this for us. It tightens our grasp on one another. It loosens our grasp on the things that we can't keep. Related to that, it also helps us experience greater freedom from the love of money, from anxiety that comes around money.

[22:45] There's a joy that comes from having our values clarified, from understanding what really matters in the world. So there's something beautiful about it, right? There's a joy that comes when we know what really and truly matters.

There's things that we think we want, stuff and possessions and money, that bring with it also anxiety and fear and control.

We overestimate how much blessing we have during times that are easy and good. Another thing that suffering does that refines God's people is it clarifies our commitment to Christ.

In other words, it breaks us from the fear of man. You have to make a choice when people are looking at Christians in this world and calling them names and ruling them out.

You realize, wow, the voice of man really doesn't matter as much as I thought it was. I don't have to care as much about what other people think about me. I can be freed from the anxiety, the fear of walking around constantly worried what other people believe about me or say about me.

[23 : 51] There's a real beauty there. And so it breaks us not just of our love of money, it breaks us of the fear of man. It grows our love and commitment to one another. It takes away the idolatries that we have in this world.

By the way, that's a wonderful experience. It's not pleasant to have fear. At least I don't think it's pleasant to have fear. The fear of man, the Bible tells us it's a snare, it's a trap.

God uses the suffering of his people to free them up. He uses their suffering to give them joy they had not experienced before. Finally, of course, we could go on all day about the ways that God refines and purifies his people in suffering.

But I'll simply end with this. He grows our hunger for his word. Remember when quarantine was over. And you were finally able to come back to church, right, with other people in the same room. There's things we didn't take for granted anymore, right? The same is true for all the sufferings of God's people. He grows our understanding of our need to be fed by him.

[25 : 00] And so we grow in our love for Christ. It is not just that suffering is limited. Suffering produces joy.

Suffering frees us from the things that we think that we love that actually ensnare us and entangle us. I'll say quickly, this is a sub-point. We could have a whole other sermon about this.

But verse 3, those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. In other words, suffering is a chance to tell other people how good and wonderful and beautiful God is.

Those who turn many to righteousness. In other words, those who help, those outside of us who are not a part of our community. Maybe those who do not consider themselves Christians to understand how beautiful these things are.

How wonderful God's grace is. If you read about the early church in the book of Acts, of course you see these things. The church experiences tremendous suffering.

[26 : 06] It also experiences this exceptional level of joy and community and fellowship and word and prayer and worship. That people continue to long after today. People will say, why can't we be like the church in Acts, right?

You want to be like the church in Acts? Well, maybe there's some suffering that needs to happen, right? That's what brings that sort of community and joy. There's a principle of life, right?

If you're not failing, you're not growing. We might say the Christian version of that is if you're not suffering, you're not growing. Or at least, it's much harder. It's much more challenging. And so we see God gives us what we need to persevere into the end.

It's not just that the suffering that we experience is limited, although it is. It's also that he's using it here and now to bring us joy. And finally, it's not just that we have joy now.

It's not just that God offers us good things in the here and now as he refines his people. He also offers them good things in the future. And so we see suffering doesn't just bring joy.

[27 : 11] Suffering ends in joy. Look with me again at the very beginning of this chapter. We've encountered the angel Michael before. Remember I told you Michael's our SF angel. He's in the special forces.

He's a Green Beret. So he's at a higher level than some of the other angels. And so we know that when Michael shows up, it's time for evil to end. Michael shows up and we find what's going to happen at the end of the world.

Verse 2, there's going to be a resurrection. As I mentioned during our confession of faith, this is the same thing that our Lord Jesus teaches us at the end of John chapter 5. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

In other words, as we persevere in this life, there is a reward that waits for us at the end. There is something good and great and beautiful that we look forward to.

I talked earlier about this idea of delayed gratification. That's what Almanzo models for us. And this is a concept in now what people talk a lot about, which is this idea of being mentally strong or having grit.

[28 : 21] And there's this book called The Mental Toughness Handbook. It talks about delayed gratification and he says this. Let's clarify what it means to delay gratification. It's the decision to resist enjoying something we crave in the present for something we crave even more down the road.

In other words, we as Christians want to crave what God offers us in the future more than what this world offers us now. And if you're anything like me, it is hard to wrap your mind around heaven. It is hard to wrap your mind around what the goodness of the world to come is going to look like when we see so many good and pleasant things now. And so I just want us to pause here for a second and talk about what is going to make heaven so good.

Why is it that we should crave that more than what we desire now? I'll give you a few examples, things that are simple but hopefully profound. There's one man who's inside I love who points out that in heaven, we're going to have only a wonderful relationship with food.

So we're not going to worry about eating too much. We're not going to worry about eating too little. Food will only be good and a blessing. It will never be bad and a curse.

[29 : 37] We will not have scales in heaven. People won't have scales in their bathroom in heaven. Okay? That's part of what we crave about the world to come. When it comes to money, there's going to be no more poverty in heaven.

People aren't going to worry about having enough. In fact, I'm going to say they're going to have too much probably or more than enough. That's what we actually see in the story of the Bible. In Genesis, Adam and Eve exist in this place of tremendous wealth.

The very first book in the Bible, the very last book in the Bible, Revelation, we're seeing the new heavens and the new earth as a place of tremendous wealth. There will be no one who doesn't have enough.

Okay? That's what things are going to look like in the new heavens and the new earth. Now you might be thinking, yeah, I'm not too worried about that. I have enough money now. Things are all right. There are many of us in this room who have very comfortable lives, right?

That's not a wrong thing. It's not wrong to have a comfortable life. There are many of you, as you've gotten older, your wealth has grown, right? And there are many things, as you've discovered, that money can't buy.

[30 : 45] You can live a comfortable life, and many of you, I'd say all of us at some level, face heartbreak in this world. Our marriages did not turn out the way we had hoped.

Our children, as we watched them become adults, do not turn out in the way we had dreamed. Our careers don't always end as we expected.

We can be comfortable, and we still feel the sting of life in this world. We still long and crave for something more and better.

We desire heaven. You could be an Olympic athlete here in Olympic City, USA, and if God blesses you with old age, you will one day be old and slow.

Okay? In heaven, you will no longer have anxiety or frustration or anger with the need to justify yourself and prove that you're right.

[31 : 50] In heaven, people won't have anger fantasies. You know what an anger fantasy is? It's exactly what it sounds like. You're so frustrated with someone else, it just consumes your mind, right?

You think about what you want to say to them, and they need to hear. Is that a pleasant experience? No, anger fantasies are not pleasant in any way. No one in heaven will leave home to fight wars.

In heaven, people will not talk about deployments. That won't be a thing. Okay? That's not part of what's in heaven. In heaven, there won't be tension between different people of different races and backgrounds.

You won't wonder what someone thinks of you because you have a different color of skin. You won't wonder if someone's suspicious of you because you come from a different country. That's not a thing in heaven.

Okay? We're not going to be suspicious of people that we don't know. And I could go on and on, right? We could keep talking. But what I want you to do is capture a vision, a sense of what life is like in heaven.

[32 : 54] That we can have the hope that God gives Daniel here and also to us. That as we want to persevere in this world, we have something great and beautiful to look forward to.

Verse 2, many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting content. We look forward as Christians to that day. We long for it. We crave it. We want to crave it more than we crave the things now that we can make it to the end. Of course, it's worth pointing out here, too, that not everyone is involved in that resurrection to everlasting life.

The Bible presents to us that there are two ways to live. There are only two destinations for people. Those who have faith in Jesus Christ and those who do not. As we've talked about many times, Charles Spurgeon gives us the definition of faith.

Faith is, first of all, knowledge. It's knowing the truth of what God gives us in the gospel. The knowledge that we are people who are sinful. We deserve God's punishment. We deserve his punishment eternally.

[33 : 57] But he sent his son to die for us on the cross to take the punishment that we deserve. Live the perfect life that we did not live. That's the knowledge, right? Spurgeon tells us, though, that knowledge is not enough.

We actually have to believe those things. So there are people who know that's what Christians teach and they don't believe it. If we're Christians, if we have faith, if we want to be those who are resurrected to eternal life, we don't just know those things.

We believe them. We believe they're true. We believe that we're sinners, that we need God's forgiveness. And then finally, Spurgeon points out it's not just knowledge and belief. It's also trust or what I might call action. We live our lives as if those things are true.

We live as Christians following after God. And so that is both the celebration for those who are Christians and the warning for those who are not. As we live in this world, there is a better place. And only those who have faith and trust in Jesus Christ are going there. Heaven is a real place. People are going there. Hell is a real place.

[34 : 59] People are going there as well. Christian, meditate and long for the joys of heaven. If you're not a Christian, think about, consider Jesus' invitation to you.

He tells us to us in Mark 1, verse 15. We'll be there pretty soon, by the way. He says, repent and believe the gospel. Later in the book of Mark, he uses the words of following.

He invites people to follow after him. And so we've seen, as we look to persevere, God's given Daniel here and us three ways.

First of all, we know that suffering is limited. We know that suffering produces joy. We know that suffering ends in joy. And as we just talked about, we need to crave something more in the future than we crave things in the present.

And yet we also know it's very difficult, at times impossible, to change our cravings. And so part of what the gospel does to encourage us is it reminds us of the truth that we cannot change ourselves and we must change.

[36 : 07] We cannot change ourselves and we must change. We have desires that we need someone else to change for us. And so we want to want Jesus more and crave him more.

And we need to know the truth of Ephesians chapter 1, that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the power at work in us. We can't change our affections. And God changes them for us. We see the same thing in Philippians chapter 2. It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. And so we look to Jesus as the one who changes our affections and our desires that we can take confidence and hope for what he gives us here.

And of course, it's our Lord Jesus who teaches us the same thing in Matthew chapter 24. He teaches that there will be suffering. He teaches that those who persevere to the end will have a reward.

He says this, That's another way of saying the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.

[37 : 26] Now, many of you know, I mentioned last week that I was in St. Louis a week ago for our denomination's national gathering. And there's many things I loved about being in St. Louis.

There's one thing that I really hated. As I am becoming an old man, I have grown in my hatred of airports and airlines.

I hate flying. And I hate flying for a variety of reasons. First of all, it's roundabout. So when I flew back from St. Louis, I had to first fly to Orlando.

If you're familiar with U.S. geography, you know that Orlando is further away from Colorado Springs, not closer. So it was roundabout. Flying was not the direct journey that I wanted.

Not only was it roundabout, it's longer than I wanted. I left my Airbnb in St. Louis a little bit after 8 a.m. I got back here to the Springs a little bit before 10 p.m. Maybe I could have driven.

[38 : 25] I don't know. Also, it's super uncomfortable. So would love to sleep on the plane. It's not a great position for sleeping.

When I've leaned my chair back in the past, I've been rebuked by the person behind me. So I don't do that anymore. I would love to be hyperproductive and listen to audiobooks. The only problem is that it's usually pretty loud right now.

At least it was last Saturday. There's so much noise, right? When I was leaving, I was staying with a friend of mine. He asked me, What are you looking forward to most about returning back to Colorado Springs?

And I thought for about half a second. And I said, I am looking to be back in my house. I am excited about being home. Why do I fly even though I hate it so much?

I fly on the airline going to Orlando first before Chicago and then to Colorado Springs. I put up with sitting in this stupid seat that's too small for me and I can't sleep in.

[39 : 24] And I deal with all this noise, unable to listen to my audiobook. Because brothers and sisters, that is the way home. In other words, the destination far eclipses and outshines anything that is difficult or challenging about the journey.

There was no moment in Orlando in which I thought, This is really stupid. I'll just stay here. And now that I'm back in Colorado Springs, there's no part of me that questions, Was it worth it?

Maybe I should have just stayed in St. Louis so I could have skipped that flight. No, of course not, right? The destination is so much better.

Brothers and sisters, as Christians, the same is true for us. Our destination far eclipses and outweighs anything that is hard or challenging about the journey.

It seems at times that God is taking us on a path that is out of the way. There are times it seems like it is much longer than we want or need and expect.

[40 : 28] And it is much less comfortable than we would like. And at some level, it doesn't matter. I was Colorado Springs or bust. We as Christians are heaven or bust.

And when we are there, there is no part of us that will look back on the sufferings of this life and wonder, Was it worth it? We will know that all of it is nothing compared to the great glory and joy of being with our Lord in heaven, experiencing fully and finally everything he promises and offers to his people.

Our destination far eclipses anything that goes along on the journey. And so, brothers and sisters, how do we persevere to the end?

We do it because we know that our suffering is limited. We know that it brings joy. And we know that it ends in joy. In other words, we can read the verses at the end of chapter 12.

Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days. But go your way till the end, and you shall rest and stand in your allotted place at the end of days.

[41 : 45] Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you and praise you for your word which you give us to strengthen and build and encourage us. We ask that you would use your encouragement to Daniel as encouragement to us, that we would continue following after you in this world no matter what, because we know that you are more beautiful and more glorious than anything else.

And we thank you that you are the one who changes our desires. We cannot change them our own. And so we ask for your help and your spirit now. And we thank you that as we ask these things, we know we haven't earned them, but we don't have to, because we ask them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.