

For this reason Jesus is Lord

(Romans 14:9)

We are gathered to celebrate the life and mourn the passing of _____. We know that we have much to thank the Lord for what he has done in the past, for what he is doing now, and what he will do in the future for _____ and for us.

We are gathered to hear God's word about his work and his promises. *His* promises are different than ours – because he keeps them.

First, Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

In the book of Hebrews, the word "faith" is really equivalent to our word "hope," as in 1 Peter 1:3: "We have a living hope." And 1 Thessalonians 4:13: "We do not grieve as others do who have no hope."

But hope is a flimsy word. We say: "I hope so..." and we mean: "Well, who knows?" We say: "hopefully" and mean "probably not."

You recall the story of Pandora's box: When she opened that box, all the evils of the world flew out but there was one thing left: Hope. The question was: Was that good or evil?

What is the basis for our hope, since the word itself can be so flimsy?

There are three basics:

1) The Lord is Lord. It sounds like I'm repeating myself, as if I were saying: One is one. In fact, what I'm saying is something about the Lord being Lord of all. In Psalm 46, the basis of the hymn, *A Mighty Fortress*, it says in verses 1, 2, and 6: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the midst of the sea, the nations rage, the kingdoms totter, He utters his voice and the earth melts."

And in the hymn, "How Great Thou Art," verse 1 says: "O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder, Consider all the worlds thy hand hath made, I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed."

Our minds are messed up about the Lord's universe by science fiction and by what we hear about in modern physics: String Theory, even Super String Theory. Are there 11 universes or 26? Who knows how many?

What we have in our first basic point is a statement about the Lordship of the Lord of Lords. He's even Lord over Star Trek and String Theory, for he is the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. The Lord is Lord.

When we ask ourselves about terrible things that happen – death, tragedy, sometimes we talk about tragedies as if the Lord were fate. We say of tragic death: "His number

was up.” Or: “It was the Lord’s will.” We need to remember that the Lord never does evil.

This is put together well in Lamentations 3:17-24:

*Remember my affliction and my bitterness,
The wormwood and the gall!
My soul continually thinks of it
And is bowed down within me.
But this I call to mind,
And therefore I have hope:*

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
His mercies never come to an end;
They are new every morning;
Great is thy faithfulness.
“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”*

Thus, first of all, the Lord is Lord.

2) Jesus is Lord. This is said as a basic confession in the New Testament several times. In fact, one could better say: “The Lord is Jesus.” How did this come to be?

It’s stated in Romans 14:9: “For this reason Jesus Christ died and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.” This sums up the gospel: “For this reason Jesus Christ died and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

When Luther preached the funeral sermon for his protector, Elector John, he talked about two kinds of death. He said there’s the big death and the little death. The big death is the one Jesus died on Calvary. As it says in John 19:30: “It is finished.” For those who are in Jesus Christ, the Last Judgment is over.

There’s the little death – not to be made light of, but to be seen in relationship and in proportion. That is summed up in John 11:25-26, where Jesus says: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.”

Also as it states in 2 Cor 5:21: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Again in the hymn, “How Great Thou Art,” vs 3 has the same message: “But when I think that God, his Son not sparing, Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in, That on the cross my burden gladly bearing, He bled and died to take away my sin.”

All of this can seem wide sweeping and abstract. Thus we move from 1) The Lord is Lord, to 2) Jesus is Lord, to ...

3) Jesus is Lord for you and me. How does this come about?

Look at Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

In the New Testament, after eight chapters in Romans, Paul sums it all up; in verses 31-32 he writes: “What shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?” Obviously that means all good things.

What does this involve? As in Jeremiah 29 and Romans 8, we find in Isaiah 43:1: “I have called you by name, you are mine.” And in 49:16: “I have branded your name on the palms of my hands.” In Romans 6:5, after writing about baptism: “If we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”

Then in a very particular way in Ephesians 1:4: “[H]e chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”

That’s the whole of the gospel. Paul concludes Romans 8 by writing: “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The Lord is Lord.

Jesus is Lord.

Jesus is Lord for you and me.

Finally, we remember John 14:1-6. We are like Thomas. We doubt. We wonder: Where does it go from here? What does it mean? In this time of grieving when we are separated and left behind, our minds can be confused about heaven. It’s important for us to realize that Scripture has thought about this and has help for us. The future is more real, not flimsy spirituality, but more real.

This means there is real life for _____. Real work and real life.

C.S. Lewis has a space story with the unfortunate title, *The Great Divorce*, where somebody goes on a visit to heaven and everything is brighter, sharper, harder – just imaginary, to be sure.

What does Scripture have to tell us? It comes back to the coming of our Lord. When Jesus came to be one of us, it was not a charade or a play. He truly became one of us and lived and died and rose again. And he continues forever – not away from us, somewhere else. He continues to be the One who is incarnate forever.

We are adopted by him as sons and daughters in Christ. We continue in him, as 1 Cor 15:44 says, in “the spiritual body.”

Again, Scripture has struggled with this. The finest picture of this in the New Testament is the wedding feast.

But beyond that, in Paul, 1 Cor 2:9: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of anyone, what God has prepared for those who love him."

As the King James Version of Ephesians 3:20 puts it: "Exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we can ask or think." Beyond all our ideas, our categories.

And in Luke 6:38: "Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over."

Therefore we have this hope, and the hope is based in God's promises.

Therefore we conclude: John 14:27: "Peace I leave you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord." Amen.