

I'm going to read just a few verses from God's Word and focus our attention on one verse, in particular, John 12, verse 26. And it's in these verses that I want us to see four certainties about every Christian. Four things that were true and are gloriously true about dear, as I knew her, and four things that are true of every person, every man, every woman, every boy, every girl who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray. Almighty God, our Father in heaven, we remember how the Lord Jesus himself wept at the tomb of Lazarus, even as he was soon to raise him from the dead. We remember the words of comfort that he gives to us. I go to prepare a place for you. And the words that we just sang that to be a believer and to die is to go and to see the savior that we've trusted here below. And so we pray now, Father, that you would send the Holy Spirit of God to fix the eyes of our hearts upon your Son, to lift Him up before us, to work faith in us, to comfort those who grieve. And Father, to strengthen us that we might serve our Savior as dear did so faithfully. We pray for your help now in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's hear the Word of God. I'm going to read John chapter 12. Verses 20 to 26, and as I said, our focus will be on verse 26. This is God's Word. Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, Sir, we wish to see Jesus. Philip went and told Andrew. Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Four certainties that Jesus describes to be true for every Christian believer that were true and are true of dear and that are true of every believer in Jesus Christ. The first certainty is that Christians are Christ's servants. In one verse, our Savior uses a word serve three times. That's how he describes his people as my servants.

This is a term of personal union. He's describing people who have come into a relationship, a bond, a connection with him. He says, they are mine. A connection wrought by his spirit. A connection of faith and trust in Jesus. And it's not only a term of union, but of lordship, that when someone becomes a Christian, her talents, her gifts, her graces, her energies, they belong to someone else, to the master. One of the reasons I chose this verse, and if you read the wonderful obituary, you saw this word many times, was for the frequency with which it uses the word serve. And that is a word that I think of when I think of dear.

I think of her many gifts, her extraordinary abilities at cooking food that you could have on a Thursday afternoon that would leave you after eating at a restaurant in New Orleans saying, well, I've had better gumbo than that. Before her health declined, her memory, the little calendar she kept upon the windowsill by the kitchen sink with people's birthdays and anniversaries of significant deaths, the notes she would send that so often included Philippians 1-3, I thank my God in all remembrance of you because she did remember you and she prayed for you and her love for music. her ability to play and to sing and her recollection of hymns. These were extraordinary gifts that she had, gifts that she had that exceeded many others in those areas, but they were gifts she used for someone else. Her best energies, her best talents were always, as I think back on them, being used for others. Stuart Eliot said of the Lord Jesus, everything the Son of God said and everything the Son of God did, he did for someone else. And we saw that in Dear's life.

Jesus describes a Christian as my servant, someone who's been brought into union with him through faith and someone whose life then belongs to him. And so I want to ask you this afternoon, are you serving Jesus Christ? Are

you his servant? Have you come in to a saving union with him through faith? And are you laying down the talents that he has given you to serve him and his people?

The first certainty is that Christians are Christ's servants. The second certainty we find in our verse is that Christians follow Christ. Christians follow Christ. He says in verse 26, if anyone serves me, he must follow him. That is, Jesus would have us to understand that there is only one kind of servant that he has.

His servants follow him. They don't merely claim his name. They don't merely associate with his people. They follow him wheresoever he goes. In fact, the Bible describes Christians elsewhere as those who follow the lamb wherever he goes. Now, praise God, his servants aren't saved by their faithfulness in following him. There's not one Christian who follows Christ perfectly, including Patsy Pister. But they must follow him.

By the grace of God, they believe and do what Jesus said in John 14, 15. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. By the grace of God, they embody what Paul said to Titus. The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright lives in this present generation. By the grace of God, We hear Peter's call in 1 Peter 1 16. Be holy, for I am holy. Jesus says that his servants must follow him. This is a necessary characteristic of those who have been saved by the grace of God and by God's grace. That is also a description of dear.

She loved, she loved the directions and words of her Savior. You could find her Bible and find her reading it. I remember one time, dear and Papa coming to visit us in Raymond and she said, well, we've been reviewing the Shorter Catechism on our drive down from Yazoo City. She loved the Reformed faith. She loved great books about the scripture and about her Savior. She believed what Jesus said about a wife respecting her husband, and one of her great exemplars was the way she loved and honored Papa. And she was a woman, as Proverbs 31 says, of strength, of strength, a woman who faced trials and pains and difficulties with fortitude and perseverance and kindness and joy. In that way, by the grace of God, she shows us what Jesus says here. My servants must follow me. And by God's grace, that is something that she delighted to do.

So I ask you, my friends. Are you serving Jesus Christ? Are you following him? Taking his word as your law, taking his people as your people, his truth as your truth. Jesus' servants follow him. The third certainty we see in this verse is that Christ's servants live with him. Christ's servants live with him. Look again in verse 26. If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there my servant will be also. Jesus says that where He is, there His servants are.

This is connected to following, isn't it? If somebody follows you in their car, you get at a stoplight, you look over into your mirror, and there they are. And you pull into the parking lot, and there they are again. They follow you, and they are with you. This is true on earth.

As Christ's servants meet Him in His ways, and meet Him with His people, and meet Him in His worship, and meet Him in daily fellowship, in prayer. And this was so true of Jesus. She was a woman who loved to be with her savior when he met with the people of God in worship, when he speaks in his word, when she was with other Christians. One of the things that I thank God for in Dears life is the circle of godly women of which she was a part. People like Linda Pister and Gam and Beckbeck. These women who spurred one another on as they loved Christ's words and

Christ's presence. A woman who loved to meet Christ in prayer. But I believe what Jesus says here about being with his servants applies not merely to our Christian experience in this life, but especially of the Christians experience at death.

And I think that's suggested by the future tense here in our verse. If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there my servant will be also. Well, the Lord Jesus endured the cross. He rose from the dead and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven. And he tells us here that when my servants die, where I am, they are also.

Dear lived for decades, loving the presence of Christ by faith and speaking to Christ in prayer through faith and hearing Christ's word in the word through faith. But Jesus here assures us that when his people die, they go to the presence of him whom they've trusted their whole life. They go to be with him. What Jesus said to the thief on the cross in Luke 23 is true of every single Christian believer. This day you will be with me in paradise.

The moment a believer dies, her soul goes to be in Christ's presence, free from sin and unbelief. What Jesus said in John 14 3, I go to prepare a place for you so that where I am, you may be also what Jesus prayed in John 17 24. Father, it is my desire that they whom you have given me may be with me where I am. Second Corinthians five to be away from the body is to be at home with the Lord. Or what Paul told the Philippians in Philippians 1 23. I would rather depart. and beware. He doesn't say in heaven, though that would be true. He says, I would rather depart and be with Christ. To be in the presence of the Savior who preached the Sermon on the Mount and healed the little girl and died on the cross and rose from the dead, not merely trusting him by faith, but home with Christ.

And Jesus says that is a certainty. Christ's servants live with Him. Are you serving Jesus Christ? Are you a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ today? Brothers and sisters in Christ, the great truth that is true for dear, and that's true for everyone who trusts in her Savior, is that they go to be home with Him. in the presence of Jesus, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the Savior we've trusted here, and then to be where he is forever. So the first certainty, Christians are Christ's servants.

Second certainty, Christ's servants follow him. The third certainty, Christ's servants live with him. And then the fourth certainty I'd like us to see from these verses, as we conclude, is that Christ's servants receive honor. Christ's servants receive honor. Jesus is here at the end of this verse.

If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Jesus says it's a certainty, just as certain that my servants follow me, just as certain that my servants go to be with me, so Jesus says it is certain that my Father in heaven shall honor those who serve me. What a contrast this is to the experience of so many Christians in the Christian life, even aspects of Deer's experience over the last years in particular with the illnesses and trials. that she faced. For many Christians, this life is not a life filled with honor. But just as we follow Jesus in his suffering, so Jesus promises that as he was honored through his resurrection glory, so too shall the father honor all who belong to him. My father, Jesus says, shall honor those who serve me. And I want you to think with me about what that might be like from the perspective of holy scripture.

But the moment dear died, the father honored her by completely sanctifying her soul so that there was now no more sin, no more pain, no more anxiety, no more worry. no more illness. And the father honored her by welcoming her into the presence of God in heaven.

And he honored her as he does every believer by placing her in a company of extraordinary people in the company of Abraham and Sarah and the company of Priscilla and Aquila. In the company of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Paul, and in the company of the angels, these holy beings who have never done anything than serve the Lord God, whose voices pulse with praise as they cover their face and their feet and cry out holy. And he honors her and every believer by placing her there. He honors her, the Bible tells us, by placing upon her and every Christian a crown, a crown of life, a crown of righteousness. He shall honor her on that great last day when Jesus comes again and she is vindicated as one right with God through faith in Jesus Christ, one whose name has been written in the Lamb's Book of Life. He shall honor her by raising her body from the dead and gloriously reuniting body and soul and perfect beauty and blessedness. He shall honor her by placing her among that company of believers under whom Satan is fully and finally crushed. And he has honored her and shall honor her by placing her in the presence of Jesus Christ. Not for a year or a decade or a century or a millennia. But for ages upon ages upon ages, not far from him, no longer merely trusting him by faith. But there with him. Near to him. In his presence.

Jesus says the father shall honor those who serve me. And so I ask you, my friends, are you serving Jesus Christ? There is nothing better in all this world to be than a servant of Jesus. Dear became, as any Christian becomes a servant of Christ, entirely by His grace and love.

And she was kept throughout her earthly life by that same grace and love. And then she's been brought into the presence of that great and gracious and loving Savior. To be honored by the Father. Think of the privilege of being a servant of Christ. That God would take the likes of us Someone like dear. And use her in her earthly life to magnify the name of the servant of the Lord Jesus. And then to bring her home to heaven. With Christ. In the honor of God the Father. Praise God and may her hope be yours and mine. Let us pray.

Almighty God, our Father in heaven, we pray for the help of your Holy Spirit to conform us to the image of your son the servant of the Lord. Lord, how we thank you for dear, for the way you showed the servanthood of Christ through her life, her thoughtfulness and kindness to other people, her sacrificial hospitality, her generosity of spirit, her joyful encouragement, her perseverance and toughness and strength in the Lord. We pray, oh God, for your help and blessing to Papa, that you would encourage his heart in the hope of the resurrection and the promise that dear is with Christ. Lord, I pray for Jamie and Rich and Laura, for your drawing near to them in love and in grace, that the promises, the gospel promises that dear taught them from before they can remember would be the things that comfort them now in her death. Lord, bless the spouses and the grandchildren and the grandchildren's spouses and the great-grandchildren. We pray, O God, for your mercy to us, that you would have your heritage and your name to be glorified from one generation to the next until our Savior returns. Father, that every generation henceforth would trust in dearest great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, and that you would enable them, O God, to live for Him. We pray, Father, that you would strengthen us by the same strength by which you raised Christ from the dead to live our lives following the Savior until He calls us home or comes to us. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.