

00:00:01:02 - 00:00:06:07

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Aaron Einfeld

So today, my guest is Professor Mary Vandenberg. She is a professor of systematic theology, here at Calvin Seminary. And we are going to be talking about the topic of death, suffering and Christian funerals. And I am very excited to talk to you today, Mary, about these three topics.

00:00:27:12 - 00:00:31:14

Mary Vandenberg

Are you really okay? Yeah, yeah. I'm.

00:00:31:14 - 00:00:58:11

Aaron Einfeld

So one of the reasons why I am excited to talk about death today, and I do, I don't I actually excited, Mary is because, you know, the topic of this podcast is all about lifelong learning, kind of the big transformative things that happen to us as humans and as Christians and we're comfortable talking about discipleship.

00:00:59:05 - 00:01:16:20

Aaron Einfeld

And about how, when you get married, things change. When you have parent, there's all these markers in life. There's even, you know, psychologists have stages of adult development that we go through. And there's really things that prompt that. And so we talk a lot about all these things as we're like growing.

00:01:17:01 - 00:01:18:06

Mary Vandenberg

Yeah.

00:01:18:08 - 00:01:31:00

Aaron Einfeld

No one's like, oh yeah. But you know as you grow some of those leaves start getting really crusty on the fringe. And so I'm excited that you're here because we're going to talk about even to the end.

00:01:31:04 - 00:01:32:15

Mary Vandenberg

Yeah.

00:01:32:17 - 00:01:42:03

Aaron Einfeld

At times where people are losing their strength, whether it's over time or whether it's immediate, God still has something for us.

00:01:42:04 - 00:01:42:12

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah.

00:01:42:16 - 00:01:53:02

Aaron Einfeld

And and the death is suffering and and grief. And so we're going to talk about what happens at death.

00:01:53:02 - 00:01:53:16

Aaron Einfeld

So

00:01:53:16 - 00:02:07:05

Aaron Einfeld

you're a systematic theology professor, but you started teaching a course which is the title and topic of this podcast. How did you get into that? Because death, you know, if you want to, like, take the energy out of the room, just say I talk about death all the time.

00:02:07:05 - 00:02:11:09

Aaron Einfeld

Right. So how did you get into teaching about death, suffering and and funerals?

00:02:11:11 - 00:02:34:09

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah. You know, that's a good question. I, I think so. I studied theological anthropology, which is the doctrine of humanity. So that's sort of my specialty area. So I thought quite a bit about humans in general and our relationship to God. And then, on top of that, humans as the image of God, and you can't talk about humans without talking about humans is finite.

00:02:34:11 - 00:02:59:14

Mary Vanden Berg

Right. And so talking about humans as finite means that we have an end, means that we have boundaries around us. And one of those boundaries or ends is our, human life on earth, and, and that we call death. So we're mortal. That's one way to put it. But people don't really talk about that either. Finitude.

00:02:59:14 - 00:03:24:23

Mary Vanden Berg

I don't think most people understand that. It's just a word you throw around and nobody knows what it means. Really. But I just started thinking about death and how that might impact, what

we do, how we live. Part of the basic rhythm of the Christian life that I talk about in my system. Class is dying and rising.

00:03:25:01 - 00:03:42:11

Mary Vanden Berg

So there's this already, this rhythm of dying and rising. That's part of life of a Christian. And and so how does that all fit together? And I was very fortunate, I guess, in some ways,

00:03:42:11 - 00:04:04:13

Mary Vanden Berg

a colleague of mine who works at a different seminary, his name is Jay Todd Billings, and he finally wrote a book. He himself is, has cancer, terminal cancer. And he wrote a book called The End of the Christian Life. The subtitle is intriguing How Embracing Our Mortality Frees Us to Truly Live.

00:04:04:15 - 00:04:05:06

Mary Vanden Berg

That's pretty.

00:04:05:06 - 00:04:07:09

Mary Vanden Berg

Cool. That's powerful. Right.

00:04:07:11 - 00:04:23:17

Mary Vanden Berg

And so then I, I've read a number of books on dying already, and one thing that starts, it's like books on sin. There's two things you can see a book on. Sin will always start with everybody denies sin. I don't care if you look at a book in the 18th century or the 20th century, people deny sin.

00:04:23:19 - 00:04:46:03

Mary Vanden Berg

Something interesting in Readings on Death is that you won't find that as often in earlier centuries, but in the more recent 50, 60 years or so, it's fairly well known that nobody talks about death. Humans deny it in the West. I should make that clear. Not everywhere, but in the West. Humans just deny death.

00:04:46:05 - 00:04:49:06

Aaron Einfeld

Which we are kind of joking a little bit about. Are you sure you want to talk about death?

00:04:49:06 - 00:04:49:22

Mary Vanden Berg

I did, we.

00:04:49:22 - 00:04:50:21

Aaron Einfeld

Don't talk about death.

00:04:50:23 - 00:04:52:08

Mary Vanden Berg

I often leave. No.

00:04:52:08 - 00:04:53:21

Aaron Einfeld

Yeah.

00:04:53:21 - 00:05:03:17

Aaron Einfeld

Yeah. So I, I'm really intrigued by that. That title, the embracing our mortality to truly live. Like, where's the, How does that work?

00:05:03:19 - 00:05:33:20

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah. So I think part of what Billings is talking about there and I sort of have my own interpretations as well, but that, if you live as if you're not dying, what does that look like? And the fact of the matter is, from the day you're born, death is in the picture. The the only way you wouldn't die is should Christ return and then will all be basically translated immediately into our resurrection bodies.

00:05:34:05 - 00:05:51:02

Mary Vanden Berg

The dead in Christ will rise first, as Paul says. And then the rest of us will be changed. So, I think that what Billings is getting at there, and I know I'm never quite sure anymore, I've read him so much that what's my thought and what's his. So I want to kind of give him credit.

00:05:51:02 - 00:05:56:19

Mary Vanden Berg

But also realize it. Well, maybe he didn't say that. Yeah. Yeah. So he's had.

00:05:56:19 - 00:05:57:09

Aaron Einfeld

A call into.

00:05:57:09 - 00:06:00:22

Mary Vanden Berg

The. Yeah. Yeah. Hopefully not. But I.

00:06:00:22 - 00:06:04:18

Mary Vanden Berg

Think the basic idea is the fact of the matter as you are dying.

00:06:05:14 - 00:06:23:00

Mary Vanden Berg

Basically from the day you're born, because it could happen any time. And at a certain point, you actually are moving more toward that. And I think part of I'll just say part of what even gave me pause, to think about it and is as I started reading these things, I myself was getting older.

00:06:24:07 - 00:06:37:05

Mary Vanden Berg

So I was probably in my late 50s when I started reading about some of this. I'm now in my mid 60s and I still know people who are my age, who I know people 20 years older than me who still act as if they're not.

00:06:37:05 - 00:06:37:19

Mary Vanden Berg

Going to die.

00:06:37:23 - 00:06:38:13

Aaron Einfeld

No, never.

00:06:38:16 - 00:06:40:10

Mary Vanden Berg

And it's like, are you crazy?

00:06:41:03 - 00:07:01:09

Mary Vanden Berg

So I'm actually looking at going, hey, this is this really is my future. And that future might be if you look at average age of death, it might be sooner than I think. Yeah. You know, so how does that impact how I live and how should it have impacted how I lived my whole life?

00:07:01:10 - 00:07:03:22

Aaron Einfeld

You have a friend who says that you die the way you live.

00:07:04:00 - 00:07:06:23

Mary Vanden Berg

That's I think that's right. Yeah, yeah.

00:07:07:01 - 00:07:22:23

Aaron Einfeld

So, you know, when you talk about an author who writes about death, who has terminal illness, you know, that gives me a sense of, oh, I'm ready to listen. Yeah. They got a lot of authority. What are they going to say? But in some sense, we all could have that same authority if we paid attention to it. Our own finely tuned.

00:07:22:23 - 00:07:23:05

Aaron Einfeld
What?

00:07:23:05 - 00:07:24:02

Mary Vanden Berg
Yeah.

00:07:24:04 - 00:07:37:13

Aaron Einfeld
What do we miss when we pretend or don't look at or don't face just this concept of, like, we're all going to die someday? Like, what do we miss? What do you miss out on?

00:07:37:15 - 00:07:53:15

Mary Vanden Berg
Well, I wonder that's a good question, Erin. I haven't I haven't probably thought through that specific, which is really a practical question too. I think some of it might be, that we miss opportunities to serve.

00:07:53:21 - 00:07:54:14

Aaron Einfeld
Okay.

00:07:54:16 - 00:08:25:15

Mary Vanden Berg
Right. If if dying is just part of life, why are we always so worried about doing things that God might be asking us to do that might cause suffering, might, endanger us in one way or another? So that might be part of it. But I also think that it's this reality of who's in control. I really think that's the larger part of the question is, if you recognize that you are mortal, well, then someone's in charge and it's not you.

00:08:25:22 - 00:08:41:05

Mary Vanden Berg
At least for Christians, I think most of us in the West, because we do have so much control over everything in life where we live, what we eat, how we get somewhere. Think about anything in your life. What don't you have control over?

00:08:42:03 - 00:09:03:01

Mary Vanden Berg

You even have fairly good control over the people around you for the most part, right? You can say something and they'll listen. Might argue a little bit. Think your kids, maybe your wife. You know, but but you have you have a some people think they have a lot of control. Right. But most people think they have a fair amount of control.

00:09:03:03 - 00:09:14:00

Mary Vanden Berg

One of the things that open my eyes to this lack of control is, the Puritans and the Puritans thought that sleeping was practice for death.

00:09:14:02 - 00:09:16:05

Aaron Einfeld

Okay, well, I really like to sleep, Mary. So.

00:09:16:06 - 00:09:17:16

Mary Vanden Berg

Well, you know. So good. What does that.

00:09:17:16 - 00:09:19:08

Aaron Einfeld

Mean about me?

00:09:19:10 - 00:09:48:00

Mary Vanden Berg

Well, there's a an ancient Jewish prayer, and, I actually really love it, and and it it goes something like this. It's from the Psalms. Father. Jesus said it from the cross. Father, into your hands I commit my spirit, for you have redeemed me. Oh, Lord, oh God of truth, keep me as the apple of your eye, and hide me under the shadow of your wings, and wake me with the morning light to serve the again.

00:09:48:02 - 00:09:58:02

Mary Vanden Berg

So what are you doing when you go to sleep? If you listen to that prayer, you're actively committing yourself into the hands of God. The fact of the matter is, you're in the hands of God every day.

00:09:58:07 - 00:09:59:08

Aaron Einfeld

Yes, right.

00:09:59:10 - 00:10:17:00

Mary Vanden Berg

But most of us don't think that way. And unless we are very intentional in how we wake up in the morning, for example, you're going to get up, you're going to do the things you always do. You're

going to go through all your rituals. You're going to go to work, you're going to, you know, etc., etc. but are you in control?

00:10:17:06 - 00:10:18:07

Aaron Einfeld

Yeah.

00:10:18:09 - 00:10:39:04

Mary Vanden Berg

And so what does that look like to sort of actively submit to God on a daily basis, not just in your sanctification, dying and rising, but in everything you do? What does that look like? What difference does that make in your life? When you say to yourself, I don't know what's going to happen today, but God knows and he's in control.

00:10:39:06 - 00:10:47:07

Mary Vanden Berg

So I'm going to commit my life to him right now and and follow where he leads today.

00:10:47:09 - 00:10:55:01

Aaron Einfeld

It's almost like it's, if, if, I'm going to use a strong word, if it's like, delusional to pretend we're not dying.

00:10:55:03 - 00:10:55:21

Mary Vanden Berg

I think that's right.

00:10:56:13 - 00:11:15:20

Aaron Einfeld

Then. And I'm guilty as anybody, probably. It's almost like that at that rhythm of that prayer is like it brings focus and clarity. Yes. So, you know, you have a terminal illness. All of a sudden things become crystal clear about your find it dude. And what matters is like, boom, right there. Yeah. So I'm just thinking about the question of maybe what we miss.

00:11:15:20 - 00:11:33:02

Aaron Einfeld

It sounds like is we we we miss that. Like, focus and clarity and sober. Yeah. Yes. Of, what we could do each day. And that prayer almost like, helps us in this pattern of formation to really say, don't pretend.

00:11:33:04 - 00:11:56:00

Mary Vanden Berg

Right. Well, and I and again, I think the most important point is really that you don't pretend that you're not, that you're in control because you're not. That's part of finitude. You have limits. God

does not. Some of the limits imposed on you are imposed by God through His Word. But you are limited. You can't. I mean, even even parents telling their children, you can do anything you want.

00:11:56:00 - 00:11:59:02

Mary Vanden Berg

You can be anything you are. It's like, well, lie. They can't.

00:11:59:06 - 00:12:00:16

Aaron Einfeld

They can do some things right and.

00:12:00:16 - 00:12:02:02

Mary Vanden Berg

Some things, but.

00:12:02:02 - 00:12:17:09

Mary Vanden Berg

You know, you can't either and neither can I. And as you get older, you do start to realize that because these crazy things like 60 is the new 40. Let me tell you, my body did not feel like this at 40. And that is just a big lie. You can think it if you want. Yeah, but it's not true.

00:12:17:21 - 00:12:18:12

Aaron Einfeld

Yeah.

00:12:18:14 - 00:12:41:22

Mary Vanden Berg

But what was true or what is true is that day to day, every day, God is in control of my life. And and I think some of those prayers, you maybe know this one. We talked about this in class this year. Some kids, myself included, grew up with. Now I lay me down to sleep, pray the Lord my soul to keep.

00:12:43:06 - 00:12:47:08

Mary Vanden Berg

People have changed it. They say. Now guide me safely through the night.

00:12:47:10 - 00:12:49:00

Aaron Einfeld

It's about safety.

00:12:49:02 - 00:12:49:10

Mary Vanden Berg

Right?

00:12:49:11 - 00:13:05:13

Mary Vanden Berg

But the prayer originally was. Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. If I should live for other days, I pray the Lord to guide my ways. Why did we take that line out?

00:13:05:15 - 00:13:07:20

Mary Vanden Berg

it's a realization of who's in control.

00:13:07:20 - 00:13:08:20

Mary Vanden Berg

You are not.

00:13:08:21 - 00:13:32:01

Aaron Einfeld

Which maybe I you know, I haven't I've read the book. Maybe I should know that you think you've referenced, but maybe that maybe another thing is that there's all this energy we spend trying to control things we do, trying to slow the aging process, trying to slow what it looks like, trying to, control so many things in our lives that maybe if we were actually be to free, free up a lot of energy to be more present.

00:13:32:05 - 00:13:32:21

Mary Vanden Berg

Right.

00:13:32:23 - 00:13:35:07

Aaron Einfeld

In our day to day relationships.

00:13:36:20 - 00:13:44:16

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah. I forget the millions of dollars that people spend, cosmetically sure to try to make themselves look younger.

00:13:44:18 - 00:13:46:20

Mary Vanden Berg

And I was like, okay.

00:13:46:20 - 00:13:47:15

Mary Vanden Berg

That's a temporary.

00:13:47:15 - 00:13:49:17

Mary Vanden Berg

Solution. You realize that right.

00:13:49:19 - 00:14:06:13

Aaron Einfeld

Now there's probably right. There's probably, as we think about, you know, lifelong development and, the 20 year old saying that prayer, releasing, practicing, dying, even if they're saying the same words, it's going to have a different resonance in someone in their 70s.

00:14:06:15 - 00:14:07:07

Mary Vanden Berg

It is.

00:14:07:09 - 00:14:07:17

Aaron Einfeld

Right.

00:14:08:06 - 00:14:18:09

Mary Vanden Berg

But why? Why should an old person say somebody who's 85? Not that well, probably realizes they're not going to live much longer.

00:14:19:06 - 00:14:45:14

Mary Vanden Berg

Why should they pray that prayer. Say that into thy hands I commit my spirit prayer. Any more than somebody who's ten right. That that child, that father that whatever. Those people that at the end of the day, you don't know what's going to happen today. You might be young, but, you know, and it sounds so morbid.

00:14:45:14 - 00:14:46:04

Mary Vanden Berg

I know people.

00:14:46:04 - 00:14:49:00

Aaron Einfeld

Say it's, death. We're talking death. Maybe it could be more crazy.

00:14:49:00 - 00:14:49:08

Mary Vanden Berg

It's like.

00:14:49:13 - 00:15:10:19

Mary Vanden Berg

Literally, you don't know what's going to happen today. You could drive to work and you could be in a car accident, and that could be the end. You don't know that your heart's not going to stop for some inexplicable reason. And I think that's also part of it, Aaron, is that by the time you get to my age of pretty well, well, at least I have seen about as many awful things as I wish.

00:15:10:19 - 00:15:25:02

Mary Vanden Berg

I mean, I'm not in war, obviously, but just in normal life. And to deny that those things could happen at any time to anyone, seems utterly foolish to me.

00:15:25:04 - 00:15:35:14

Aaron Einfeld

I just wonder if people think I'm talking about all of us, right? Maybe. Maybe then when something bad happens, it's more surprising or jarring because it's not what we expect.

00:15:35:19 - 00:15:36:10

Mary Vanden Berg

I think that's.

00:15:36:10 - 00:15:37:00

Mary Vanden Berg

Right.

00:15:37:02 - 00:15:37:18

Aaron Einfeld

Because that's.

00:15:37:18 - 00:15:39:12

Mary Vanden Berg

Right. Aaron. Yeah.

00:15:40:04 - 00:15:42:16

Aaron Einfeld

Of course it's terrible if we expect it to.

00:15:42:18 - 00:15:43:04

Mary Vanden Berg

Right.

00:15:43:04 - 00:15:44:11

Mary Vanden Berg

You shouldn't walk around, you.

00:15:44:11 - 00:15:45:11

Mary Vanden Berg
Know, like with, I think.

00:15:45:13 - 00:15:56:07

Mary Vanden Berg
My husband sometimes things I do that I don't, I shouldn't walk around with a cloud over my head. Although he did forbid me from saying that prayer. Like when he's in bed with me, he's like, I do not want to think about dying.

00:15:56:09 - 00:16:00:00

Mary Vanden Berg
This is not practice for like, whatever. You can.

00:16:00:00 - 00:16:00:07

Aaron Einfeld
Agree to.

00:16:00:07 - 00:16:05:05

Mary Vanden Berg
Disagree. Yeah, okay. You should you should be reminded. Yeah. But,

00:16:05:06 - 00:16:22:21

Mary Vanden Berg
But yeah, I, I think I do think that some especially what I'll call unexpected deaths because they are unexpected. We don't expect children to die. Of course, I had a nephew. They're a little. They're a little child. Three months old, died this past fall. It was horrendous.

00:16:22:21 - 00:16:23:04

Aaron Einfeld
Terrible.

00:16:23:05 - 00:16:47:21

Mary Vanden Berg
Out of nowhere, you know, just boom. All the guys heart stopped, and that was it. And, yeah, it was a really horrible situation. And, we all would say babies shouldn't die. Well, that is absolutely true. It's actually true that none of us should. That wasn't God's intention from the beginning. His intention was that we would live with him, and we pretty much messed that up.

00:16:48:09 - 00:17:00:08

Mary Vanden Berg
So so. But that doesn't mean the jarring nature of of a young I mean, Billings is, but I think when he was diagnosed, he was about four, in his early 40s.

00:17:01:20 - 00:17:38:17

Mary Vanden Berg

He's lived he's probably around 50 now, I don't know his age, but just to say nobody wants somebody that's 40 to die, it's just young, you know, there's a certain age at which we're like well you know they were 80 just like that. Okay. Other people are still going to miss that person. But to your point, I think it is important not to minimize, not to minimize the grief, particularly when there's an, the death of someone who will just say died too soon.

00:17:39:08 - 00:18:05:12

Mary Vanden Berg

Right. Yeah. And that could be it. I think that in our own minds that age probably even changes with age, you know. So if one of my friends dies, I guess it's, it still feels a little too soon to me. But not like if a child dies, that just seems like a horror that's almost unimaginable. And I'm not saying that we should in any way get used to that.

00:18:05:14 - 00:18:23:19

Mary Vanden Berg

I don't I don't think we get used to death. I just think we should have a better awareness of death. Because I do think it can help us to live in a way that's more faithful to, who God is and who we are in relationship to him.

00:18:27:12 - 00:18:33:11

Aaron Einfeld

So let's let's talk about suffering now we see gets even better death. Now we're gonna talk about suffering.

00:18:33:14 - 00:18:34:14

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah.

00:18:38:17 - 00:18:49:18

Aaron Einfeld

There's a lot of money spent. On avoiding pain. Right? I mean, the whole it's pains and gains when you're from a business strategy, you're trying to release someone's pain.

00:18:49:19 - 00:18:50:14

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah.

00:18:50:14 - 00:18:58:02

Aaron Einfeld

Yeah. What are some of the main points you make in your class about suffering? Yeah, I mean, it's a huge topic, but.

00:18:58:06 - 00:18:58:16

Mary Vanden Berg
Yeah.

00:18:58:16 - 00:19:00:06

Aaron Einfeld

Where should we get started on this part?

00:19:00:08 - 00:19:02:04

Mary Vanden Berg

So we don't talk about the problem of evil.

00:19:02:04 - 00:19:04:00

Mary Vanden Berg

I'll say that right up front. Yeah.

00:19:04:02 - 00:19:26:22

Mary Vanden Berg

That's a different topic. In some ways it's related. The whole why questions. We just sort of float over those and, and think in terms of death and suffering. All of the topics under that, more in terms of these are the results of the fall. So we're not going to get into why me or any of that.

00:19:26:23 - 00:19:45:10

Mary Vanden Berg

Right, right, right. But I think what's suffering, one of the things that I do spend a little bit of time on in class is, some of the questions surrounding and it's related to death, the medicalization of suffering. Okay.

00:19:45:10 - 00:19:45:14

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah.

00:19:45:15 - 00:20:10:03

Mary Vanden Berg

Like you said, the industry and, there's some good books written by physicians who are actually calling into question some of the practices we have with respect to trying to prolong life, which may or may not actually be prolonging life in many cases. What we're doing is prolonging death. So can you actually live a better life if you don't do that fourth round of chemo?

00:20:10:14 - 00:20:43:22

Mary Vanden Berg

I can almost guarantee you from from what I've read, that you will, that in some cases, not taking that fourth round of chemo will say, just as an example. You may even live longer than the person that does take it. There was one such study done at Harvard that demonstrated that,

so, that in itself is interesting, but, the question is again, how do you face death in a realistic way?

00:20:44:00 - 00:20:52:17

Mary Vanden Berg

How do you recognize that? Sometimes death where it's connected to disease is just inevitable.

00:20:53:16 - 00:21:25:03

Mary Vanden Berg

And I'm not saying that's an easy question to answer. But it turns out that Christians are much more likely to prolong death than other folks with extraordinary measures. And I think that's kind of appalling at some level. But I think many think that God's gonna make a miracle. That's what they've been told. And so some studies have shown that others, other Christians think that, they just need to wait.

00:21:25:03 - 00:21:39:04

Mary Vanden Berg

What God have time to work. And this is in really dire situation and. Yeah. And and I think at the core of it is that we just don't think we ought to suffer kind of what you said. We don't want pain.

00:21:40:23 - 00:22:13:02

Mary Vanden Berg

Is suffering good. There's some good things about suffering. Paul indicates that that suffering produces perseverance. For example, and, and so biblically even there's some, I'll say some gain from suffering. The Christian martyrs thought there was some gain in suffering. I'm hesitant to say all suffering is good, but there is something and, I've been reading an older book lately.

00:22:13:11 - 00:22:26:07

Mary Vanden Berg

It's a little devotional book written. And then about 1923, I think it's a compilation of authors, so interesting because the whole book is basically reflections on suffering.

00:22:26:09 - 00:22:27:03

Aaron Einfeld

Okay.

00:22:27:04 - 00:22:40:20

Mary Vanden Berg

And the whole theme of every reflection is that God is doing this for your good. He is in this. He is with you, and he's doing this to help you grow stronger in your faith. Man, I don't think that would preach in today's world.

00:22:40:23 - 00:22:42:20

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah, not in the US anyway.

00:22:42:21 - 00:22:45:05

Aaron Einfeld

That's very against what it is.

00:22:45:05 - 00:22:52:07

Mary Vanden Berg

It's like, don't make God the the, you know, make him look like he's responsible. It's like, well, he is in control. We're back to that control issue.

00:22:53:17 - 00:23:14:12

Mary Vanden Berg

So I mean that's part of it is just helping people realize. But I do think that again in the U.S., people don't think they should have any pain. And I have some people that I know pretty well who are physicians. And they'll tell you that one of the problems with the opioid crisis is that people start taking too many opioids because they think they should have no pain.

00:23:16:07 - 00:23:28:22

Mary Vanden Berg

Well, most people live with some degree of pain. And if they don't they will. And my own doctor will remind me of that, that some pain is normal. By the time you get to be 65.

00:23:29:00 - 00:23:30:07

Aaron Einfeld

It's part of the human experience.

00:23:30:07 - 00:23:31:06

Mary Vanden Berg

It's just is.

00:23:31:06 - 00:23:32:08

Aaron Einfeld

Something's wrong.

00:23:32:08 - 00:23:52:23

Mary Vanden Berg

No, there's just your muscles going to ache. I mean, we laugh some years, probably beyond our mid 50s. We went to go help our sun rake leaves at his at their new house. They just married or something. I don't know what year that was, but, we went there. Some mountain of leaves and arrows. It was crazy.

00:23:53:03 - 00:23:57:17

Mary Vanden Berg

So we spent a whole day raking leaves with them, and we could tell.

00:23:57:17 - 00:23:59:06

Aaron Einfeld

The next day.

00:23:59:08 - 00:24:09:08

Mary Vanden Berg

Well, our first house had a mountain of leaves, too, and we were 22. I don't think I remember being sore at all. I think we just raked the leaves, went to bed, got up the next morning. Good to.

00:24:09:08 - 00:24:10:11

Aaron Einfeld

Go. Yeah.

00:24:10:13 - 00:24:27:21

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah. So, no, it's, it's some pain, though. As you get older, it's just going to be normal. I think probably. I don't know at what point that starts, but I'm guessing that. I mean, even if you work out at 20, if you really push yourself, you're gonna have some pain the next year.

00:24:27:21 - 00:24:28:20

Aaron Einfeld

Yeah.

00:24:28:21 - 00:24:49:16

Mary Vanden Berg

So. And that's normal. And pain doesn't always tell you that something's wrong. Sometimes it just tells you you use something really hard and it built some muscle strength. Right? Or you should be using it more. So you're building muscle strength, right? Well, I wonder if if I'll say mental or spiritual pain isn't like that as well.

00:24:49:16 - 00:25:04:11

Mary Vanden Berg

The Bible seems to indicate that it is. Paul talks about his sufferings all the time. Jesus is in this world, you will suffer. So it's kind of like. But again, is anybody preaching on that? Not enough?

00:25:04:13 - 00:25:06:22

Aaron Einfeld

It's more of keep us comfortable, keep us safe.

00:25:06:22 - 00:25:08:20

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah, yeah.

00:25:08:22 - 00:25:24:02

Mary Vanden Berg

God will take care of you. He'll be, you know, everything's going to turn out okay. Don't worry about it. That's prosperity gospel. It's implicit. But you might as well be telling them they'll get a motorhome next week because. Because it's it's not really quite true.

00:25:24:02 - 00:25:24:18

Mary Vanden Berg

Okay.

00:25:24:18 - 00:25:31:06

Mary Vanden Berg

I mean one of the I, one of the options my students get to do in systematic to is read the book silence or watch the movie.

00:25:31:11 - 00:25:31:18

Mary Vanden Berg

Okay.

00:25:31:18 - 00:25:33:09

Mary Vanden Berg

Severe persecution.

00:25:33:09 - 00:25:34:20

Aaron Einfeld

Yeah.

00:25:34:22 - 00:25:51:19

Mary Vanden Berg

And yet is God there. Is he with those people in their persecution. And is he using that for some ultimate good, the good of the kingdom? That's Romans 8:28. It's not your personal good. It's the ultimate good of his people. Plural.

00:25:51:19 - 00:26:02:04

Mary Vanden Berg

It's. It really. It's a blanket on all suffering that somehow, if you can't say that God's in control of suffering, who is in.

00:26:02:06 - 00:26:04:14

Aaron Einfeld

Some ways, it's like you can't.

00:26:04:15 - 00:26:05:09

Mary Vanden Berg
We talk about away.

00:26:05:09 - 00:26:07:20

Aaron Einfeld
From that problem of evil then like it goes to this problem.

00:26:07:21 - 00:26:08:19

Mary Vanden Berg
Does and.

00:26:08:19 - 00:26:40:05

Mary Vanden Berg
I don't again, I don't deal with that in class. I know all the standard answers to that, including the atheists answer. Are the best atheist I've ever read. But but I think that that stepping back and and saying, well, God's out there somewhere, but he's not here right now. Is that what you want to say, or do you want to say that that when a sparrow falls from a tree, God is with that sparrow?

00:26:41:04 - 00:27:06:22

Mary Vanden Berg
Not a sparrow can fall from the tree. Apart from this is the typical translation. The will of your father in heaven. Now, we can talk all day about God's promise of will is active, etc., etc., etc. but that text actually in the Greek says not a sparrow can fall from a tree apart from your father in heaven. In other words, whatever's happening there, God is right there with that sparrow.

00:27:07:00 - 00:27:13:06

Mary Vanden Berg
He isn't necessarily causing the fall, but he is right there.

00:27:13:12 - 00:27:18:20

Aaron Einfeld
So in some ways. Listen, we'll get to funerals. Here's the transition.

00:27:19:15 - 00:27:20:00

Mary Vanden Berg
Oh. We got.

00:27:20:01 - 00:27:20:10

Aaron Einfeld
Off. We all.

00:27:20:10 - 00:27:21:10

Mary Vanden Berg

Got kinda. Yeah.

00:27:21:10 - 00:27:28:06

Aaron Einfeld

That's right. We all die, Suffering is definitely part of the human experience.

00:27:28:06 - 00:27:29:21

Mary Vanden Berg

It is not just Christians.

00:27:29:21 - 00:27:30:20

Mary Vanden Berg

Oh, yeah.

00:27:30:22 - 00:27:50:06

Mary Vanden Berg

And so even the question of when Christians seem to not want to suffer seem to think they don't need to suffer or shouldn't suffer. Why? You're human, you're going to suffer. You're also going to suffer, almost certainly for the sake of being in Christ. So we suffer as Christians

00:27:50:06 - 00:27:51:19

Mary Vanden Berg

And we suffer as humans.

00:27:51:21 - 00:28:01:02

Aaron Einfeld

So it's somewhat it's like especially part of a Christian life is the suffering. And there's and there's lessons in there. There's lessons that we.

00:28:01:03 - 00:28:03:02

Mary Vanden Berg

I think what we do with the suffering.

00:28:03:02 - 00:28:10:22

Mary Vanden Berg

Is, is it very important? Yes. But again, suffering for the sake of Christ. Christians will do that.

00:28:10:22 - 00:28:22:18

Mary Vanden Berg

But all humans suffer. So what is it about about Christians? It's different in how we approach our suffering versus or do we just look like every other human?

00:28:23:12 - 00:28:26:06

Mary Vanden Berg

Do we look like how culture or approach is suffering.

00:28:26:08 - 00:28:45:09

Aaron Einfeld

Well, maybe it maybe goes toward I'm going to put grief and suffering together because we're going to land on the funeral topic. Right. So, you know, if there's, if you grieve but you agree with hope, maybe you suffer and you suffer with hope at the same time, even if it doesn't feel like there's hope.

00:28:46:01 - 00:28:49:16

Mary Vanden Berg

But what is the hope when you're suffering?

00:28:49:18 - 00:29:16:11

Aaron Einfeld

It could be the it depends on the suffering. Right. So the suffering I talked to a student who was going into seminary, was a nurse at the time, and part of the reason why they were going into work in pastoral care was because they saw such poor bedside manner by clergy who were actually kind of feeding into that hope of the healing versus a hope of a resurrection.

00:29:16:11 - 00:29:24:12

Aaron Einfeld

She said to me, you know, what people need is hope in the resurrection. At some point, if they're dying.

00:29:24:12 - 00:29:25:00

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah.

00:29:25:00 - 00:29:27:02

Aaron Einfeld

If they're actively dying.

00:29:28:05 - 00:29:30:06

Aaron Einfeld

Medically, actively dying. Right. I know we're.

00:29:30:08 - 00:29:31:05

Mary Vanden Berg

Right. Right, right, right.

00:29:31:06 - 00:29:42:08

Mary Vanden Berg

No, I understand, yeah, right. The difference. So I think part of it, when you think about it that way, I think that's a really I think that's really important. Like your friend the nurse was saying or it was a student.

00:29:42:08 - 00:29:43:18

Aaron Einfeld

Yeah. They they became a student. Yeah.

00:29:43:18 - 00:30:05:16

Mary Vanden Berg

Okay. Yeah. I think that's really important. And I think the hope when you're suffering is certainly pointed toward the resurrection that Christ, you know, Hebrews says that Christ has suffered in every way as we did. And that's why he can go to the father on our behalf. We already have that mediator. Right. So all of that gets wrapped into this course as well.

00:30:06:03 - 00:30:37:07

Mary Vanden Berg

So Christ is that ultimate hope. He's currently mediating for us with the father. And we have the presence, the comforting, advocating presence of the Holy Spirit with us now. So the hope is always future. So future is that, you know, the resurrection. But now, right now, Christ is with the father advocating on our behalf. And the spirit is even praying for us in words that we can't express.

00:30:37:07 - 00:31:02:17

Mary Vanden Berg

If we can't pray, the spirit will pray. And frankly, so should the church. That's why prayer in the church is so important. That's why congregational prayer is so important. Because sometimes when, suffering is really severe. At least for me, there's been times I can't pray. I have nothing to say to God. I'm unhappy. I don't like what just happened.

00:31:02:19 - 00:31:09:12

Mary Vanden Berg

I want to reverse it. I want to go back to before and not live in the pain of this.

00:31:09:15 - 00:31:10:18

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah.

00:31:10:20 - 00:31:34:03

Mary Vanden Berg

And right then, I don't necessarily need that resurrection hope as I need assurance of his presence. Now, here and now. Because he is there. The spirit is with us at all times and in all places. We don't have to ask for it. We just have to be aware of it. And Christ is always with the father representing us.

00:31:34:05 - 00:31:55:12

Mary Vanden Berg

So finding us that he's already conquered all of this. And and so in suffering probably one of our best prayers is something I guess a lot of people don't want to pray because they like their life here. Lord Jesus, come quickly. This is not the way you intended it to be. This isn't what you wanted. And yet this is what we have because of our free will.

00:31:55:12 - 00:31:56:12

Mary Vanden Berg

Back in the garden.

00:31:56:17 - 00:32:09:14

Aaron Einfeld

You want to take. So you said, obviously Jesus suffered. I mean, even if we look at the, Garden of Gethsemane. Yeah. And his prayer about suffering. But it was a submission to Will.

00:32:09:16 - 00:32:10:03

Mary Vanden Berg

You guys,

00:32:10:09 - 00:32:10:16

Aaron Einfeld

It was.

00:32:11:00 - 00:32:13:12

Mary Vanden Berg

If it be your will, let this cup pass from me.

00:32:14:09 - 00:32:18:06

Mary Vanden Berg

It's not. Would you just take this away now? Because I'm really tired of this.

00:32:18:08 - 00:32:19:13

Aaron Einfeld

These disciples are asleep.

00:32:19:18 - 00:32:36:08

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah. They're lame, my friends of all. Or read the lament Psalms. My friends have all left me. I have no one. But I have you lament psalms. You know they're not prayers of doubt. They're prayers of faith, are they? Wouldn't be praying.

00:32:36:10 - 00:32:40:13

Aaron Einfeld

So it's not. It's not a minimizing of someone's suffering or minimizing of someone.

00:32:40:13 - 00:32:41:23

Mary Vanden Berg

I don't know, tragedy.

00:32:41:23 - 00:32:46:21

Aaron Einfeld

It is. It's entering into that and and breathing out, you know, it's very emotional.

00:32:46:22 - 00:32:47:23

Mary Vanden Berg

Yes it is.

00:32:47:23 - 00:32:49:23

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah.

00:32:50:01 - 00:33:18:02

Mary Vanden Berg

And it's not a false promise either that that somehow, you know, you're going to get better or it, it's, it's sort of a day to day journey with the person who's suffering, whether it's because they've lost dear ones in death or whether they're personally suffering in a physical way or a mental way. Mental illness can be, worse than physical illness.

00:33:19:09 - 00:33:37:00

Mary Vanden Berg

Or maybe they're just spiritually struggling with God because of the other suffering in their life. So what do they need? They need to hear that God is with them. He is the one who is able to do exceedingly more than you could ask or imagine. Now we are in Ephesians again.

00:33:37:02 - 00:33:38:08

Aaron Einfeld

There we go.

00:33:39:10 - 00:34:08:00

Mary Vanden Berg

And and what does that mean? Does that mean he's that he will do that? Well, Jesus knew that God could send a legion of angels. He says as much. When Peter cuts off the ear of the of the shoulder. But he says, if it be your will. So what changes in our heads when instead of saying, you just have to heal grandma, you just have to heal my son, you just Lord, we just know.

00:34:08:00 - 00:34:31:06

Mary Vanden Berg

We know you can and you, we just we just ask you to do that now, how is that different then? How is that different than Lord? This is a serious situation. You know that better than we do. And we ask that if it is your will. You would heal grandma.

00:34:31:08 - 00:34:33:10

Aaron Einfeld

This comes back to your dying every night.

00:34:33:12 - 00:34:33:22

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah.

00:34:33:23 - 00:34:38:03

Aaron Einfeld

Have a have an active release. It is.

00:34:38:05 - 00:35:08:15

Mary Vanden Berg

But we're not trained to that. And that's what I'm, you know, part of my, the, the goal of the course is what does it look like if our practices form us to just think in that way, that everything that happens, the good, the bad, absolutely. Everything is, is sort of recognized as being in God's control, part of his perfect will that will eventually land us in a new heavens and new earth.

00:35:09:03 - 00:35:15:19

Mary Vanden Berg

Even if we see through a glass darkly now, not only understanding God, but his ways.

00:35:15:21 - 00:35:29:00

Aaron Einfeld

So like my like, real pragmatic question is like, okay, well, how should we do a funeral? And in some ways, you know, and to the pastors who are listening, Mary and I have heard you talking, we've met you. We know that you like to do funerals more than weddings.

00:35:29:04 - 00:35:30:13

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah, that's right, they do.

00:35:30:18 - 00:35:36:01

Aaron Einfeld

And I think as we reflect on this, we preparing for our conversation. It's about that sense of clarity. And people are paying attention.

00:35:36:01 - 00:35:36:12

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah.

00:35:36:12 - 00:35:58:05

Aaron Einfeld

At a funeral anyway. They aren't at a wedding, which maybe goes to that sober minded clarity that this whole habit of dying and rising, gives us. But I guess what I'm hearing is, yeah, okay, we can go through some of that. Here's some tips, here's some how to's. But in some ways is preparing them for that moment over the course of their whole life.

00:35:58:05 - 00:35:58:17

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah.

00:35:58:19 - 00:36:12:18

Aaron Einfeld

And having a wholly different attitude and embrace of the experience of death and suffering in someone's life so that by the time you get to the funeral, this has been practiced. It has it's been practiced.

00:36:12:20 - 00:36:17:10

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah. I think that's exactly right, Aaron. That that would be what I would hope.

00:36:17:12 - 00:36:18:19

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah,

00:36:18:19 - 00:36:28:00

Aaron Einfeld

So funerals, I mean, my, And you said, you know, you pulling active pastors to talk about what it's like to lead funerals.

00:36:28:00 - 00:36:28:16

Mary Vanden Berg

And I do.

00:36:29:13 - 00:36:31:03

Mary Vanden Berg

They're really good, by the way.

00:36:31:08 - 00:36:38:19

Aaron Einfeld

Yeah. What what is is there something we should know about funerals? Like, What? Like what makes it really? I'll say good.

00:36:39:01 - 00:36:40:08

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah, well.

00:36:41:03 - 00:36:43:02

Aaron Einfeld

I know everyone's life is different in.

00:36:43:02 - 00:36:43:08

Mary Vanden Berg

Different.

00:36:43:10 - 00:36:52:02

Aaron Einfeld

Positions and everything, but, I'm curious, like, what that conversation looks like in your classroom about what makes a good funeral or what what people should know.

00:36:52:04 - 00:36:52:19

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah,

00:36:52:19 - 00:37:12:03

Mary Vanden Berg

the the general, the, the pastors that I go to, the pastors at my church, and, it's Peter Younger and, our music minister, Larry Visser, and they say that the funeral should be a parable of where you begin, sort of neutral ish, like maybe with a, praise song of some sort.

00:37:12:05 - 00:37:15:13

Mary Vanden Berg

Then you dip down into mourning.

00:37:15:15 - 00:37:16:07

Aaron Einfeld

You go into.

00:37:16:07 - 00:37:37:17

Mary Vanden Berg

It. Yeah. And and really, that might be songs. It might be readings. It could be anything. But you want to dip down into mourning and then sort of come back up and and on resurrection hope. Right. And the point is that people don't want to grieve, people want to push it aside, people want to push bodies aside.

00:37:37:17 - 00:37:46:21

Mary Vanden Berg

They want to push everything about the funeral aside. They don't want to deal with it. And that's actually really psychologically very harmful. And I think I mentioned to you earlier, there's.

00:37:47:18 - 00:37:48:15

Mary Vanden Berg

A condition,

00:37:48:15 - 00:38:12:08

Mary Vanden Berg

called complicated grief, which is a condition, where people have not grieve properly. They've kind of stuffed it away and, haven't really dealt with it, and it can end up, coming out in ways that, that it shouldn't. The grief is going to manifest itself one way or another, sooner or later.

00:38:12:10 - 00:38:39:19

Mary Vanden Berg

And so you should figure out how what one person talks about grief as work. I read one person who talks about it as, trying to walk through sand up to your knees with 100 pounds on your back. That's the work of grief. And I don't think and think about American culture like the church. Unfortunately, isn't too different in this particular case.

00:38:39:21 - 00:38:42:15

Mary Vanden Berg

We don't want to work at grief.

00:38:42:17 - 00:38:43:16

Aaron Einfeld

We just want it to go away.

00:38:43:16 - 00:38:52:04

Mary Vanden Berg

We want it to go away. Yeah. Just like pain. Yeah. We want it to go away. And and we may want to blame somebody else for it, for all that matters.

00:38:53:06 - 00:39:02:03

Mary Vanden Berg

And so how can funerals not only assist people to grieve but actually encourage them to do so.

00:39:02:03 - 00:39:42:22

Mary Vanden Berg

And so one of the things I like to think about with that sort of work of grief is how, again, how does the practice, there's this ongoing recognition of dying help us be able to face death our

own or somebody we love, better and really actively participate in that work of grief? And I like to say sometimes that, if you think about or in lent right now, if you think about, Easter, Holy Week and particularly Good Friday and that weekend, Good Friday is when Jesus dies and everybody's really sad, and most of us like to just jump to Easter.

00:39:42:22 - 00:39:57:15

Mary Vanden Berg

And in funerals we do too. We might be sad the day of, but by the time we get to the funeral, we just want Easter. We want to hear about Easter. That's okay. But Holy Saturday is in there. How do you think the disciples felt on Holy Saturday?

00:39:57:17 - 00:39:58:19

Aaron Einfeld

There's a sitting with it.

00:39:58:20 - 00:40:27:08

Mary Vanden Berg

There is. That's the word right. They only did it for a day. Most of us need way more than a day when it's for somebody that we love. I mean, it might be if it's somebody we know but aren't particularly close to, that's obviously different. But when this is your family member, or a close friend, you need to take that time to to mourn that loss because it is a loss.

00:40:27:08 - 00:40:32:15

Mary Vanden Berg

I mean, okay, they're with the Lord and here you are. How's that feel?

00:40:33:14 - 00:40:59:04

Mary Vanden Berg

It doesn't feel good sometimes if the person, even a young person has been suffering with cancer or I'll just say usually it's something like cancer. Right. But it can be other diseases or an accident. But I'll just say a suffering situation where somebody didn't immediately die, but either suffered after an accident for a good length of time or something like that.

00:41:01:11 - 00:41:21:18

Mary Vanden Berg

I think it's easier to sort of feel relief. Because you've been grieving. My dad had dementia and for about the last four years he was alive. He was a steady decline. The first 11 years were not great, but he wasn't in terrible shape.

00:41:22:20 - 00:41:34:05

Mary Vanden Berg

But the last four years were pretty well at his death. I love my dad. I'd love him back. But the dad that died, was not the dad that I knew most of my life.

00:41:34:07 - 00:41:36:00

Aaron Einfeld

He had been experiencing loss along the.

00:41:36:00 - 00:42:02:21

Mary Vanden Berg

Way all along. Yeah, right. I mean, I didn't very often leave the center over at the place where he stayed with his dementia the last four years without crying. Because and he ended up in nursing care and you know, it was just, it was torture in some ways to go up there and know that I'm not going to really see the dad that I used to love having theological conversations with and whatnot.

00:42:03:07 - 00:42:22:05

Mary Vanden Berg

But he was still my dad. But and he wasn't really suffering, honestly, he wasn't. But all of us were. And so there was a sense of relief with that and release even that he's finally gone to be with the Lord. And that is, in fact, much better, as Paul says.

00:42:22:07 - 00:42:30:23

Aaron Einfeld

But even in that situation, you know, your parabola where it goes down, it does. There's you're still saying, I'm going to get you still in that service. You you went down.

00:42:30:23 - 00:42:37:03

Mary Vanden Berg

Absolutely. They did. Yeah. And actually we didn't so much because of what we did. But that was during Covid.

00:42:37:03 - 00:42:38:11

Mary Vanden Berg

Unfortunately that's whole.

00:42:38:11 - 00:42:59:19

Mary Vanden Berg

So we had a graveside service, but it did have a mini, it will say a mini parabola. Yeah. There was plenty of mourning there. Yeah. But I think it I think what pastors need to keep in mind is however you name your service, whatever. Family what I would do my best and and again, I'm a theologian. I'm not a pastor on I would probably just offend people.

00:43:00:10 - 00:43:21:16

Mary Vanden Berg

But as pastors, you guys know how to do this better than I ever would. Help encourage the family to take time to grieve, to take time at that funeral. They maybe don't want to have those

sad things. Oh, it's I don't want this. This is going to be a celebration. We're going to just we're going to just enjoy my mom as she was.

00:43:21:16 - 00:43:27:11

Mary Vanden Berg

It's like, I get that I do, but doesn't it hurt.

00:43:29:11 - 00:43:34:12

Mary Vanden Berg

Take time to allow it to hurt. Take time to feel the loss.

00:43:34:13 - 00:43:35:17

Aaron Einfeld

Which takes courage.

00:43:35:18 - 00:43:36:17

Mary Vanden Berg

It does.

00:43:36:17 - 00:43:37:18

Aaron Einfeld

It takes courage.

00:43:37:20 - 00:43:55:22

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah. And I think it's just so important. Overall because there are emotions involved. And if you don't deal with your emotions as a psychologist that I know well said to me, they're going to come out sideways.

00:43:55:22 - 00:44:16:13

Aaron Einfeld

if there's one thing that people could take away, whether the pastors or curious listeners, what's the thing they should remember about this whole topic of like, death and suffering and grieving and these really heavy topics like what? What do they need to know?

00:44:16:14 - 00:44:36:16

Mary Vanden Berg

I think that for Christians, probably if I could sum up everything, it would be, that death and suffering are part of life, and we shouldn't try to minimize that.

00:44:38:02 - 00:45:03:20

Mary Vanden Berg

We need to learn to face it. We need to learn to grieve, but recognize that through all of this, whether suffering or death, our grief always has that future outlook of hope. Because of Christ. So God is with us, and we have hope for the future because of Christ's work on our behalf.

00:45:03:22 - 00:45:12:03

Aaron Einfeld

And we're able to have that hope even amidst the suffering. It's not that we have to minimize one in order to have the other know there together.

00:45:12:03 - 00:45:16:05

Mary Vanden Berg

They're together and God is with us in that suffering.

00:45:16:07 - 00:45:16:18

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah.

00:45:16:20 - 00:45:18:03

Aaron Einfeld

Yeah.

00:45:18:03 - 00:45:42:14

Aaron Einfeld

So Mary, thanks for having this conversation. I really was looking forward to talking about death. My last question I always like to ask, guess is what gives you hope? Which maybe has been the whole topic of our conversation. But I'll ask it again, right in your situation, in your what you're facing, like, what gives you hope?

00:45:42:15 - 00:45:43:14

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah.

00:45:44:10 - 00:45:50:08

Mary Vanden Berg

It is interesting. I'm just looking back or thinking back to that first question you asked, how did I get into this?

00:45:50:08 - 00:45:52:19

Mary Vanden Berg

Yeah. And,

00:45:52:21 - 00:46:14:07

Mary Vanden Berg

In my doctoral program, which is quite a long time ago now, I actually, did some work on hope as a virtue from the Roman Catholic perspective. It's one of the three theological virtues. And I think that maybe was a seed that was planted to think more about this, because I do also I mean, yes, I think about death, but I like to think about hope.

00:46:14:09 - 00:46:38:12

Mary Vanden Berg

But what gives me hope is what Christ did for us. I just, you know, if I, if I look at any given situation to know that even in the worst of circumstances, God is right there with me, so that when I'm suffering, when I'm at my wit's end because I. I don't even have words to say to him.

00:46:39:09 - 00:46:57:05

Mary Vanden Berg

I can always pray the Lord's Prayer, and I can always ask the church to pray for me, and they will. And and that ultimately I can look to Christ. And this is Calvin's words as medicine for my wounds and comfort for my dread.

00:46:58:09 - 00:47:02:21

Mary Vanden Berg

So I can look at myself but there's not going to be many resources there.

00:47:02:23 - 00:47:04:01

Aaron Einfeld

And I see you never alone.

00:47:04:06 - 00:47:14:21

Mary Vanden Berg

I'm never alone because I have the Holy Spirit in me leading, guiding, correcting, changing hopefully over time.

00:47:14:23 - 00:47:17:04

Aaron Einfeld

And that's present in all parts of the parabola.

00:47:17:06 - 00:47:18:00

Mary Vanden Berg

It is.

00:47:18:00 - 00:47:20:01

Aaron Einfeld

Yeah. Yeah. Well thanks.

00:47:20:01 - 00:47:24:08

Mary Vanden Berg

Mary. Yeah. Thank you Aaron. Yeah. Been fun. Yeah.