

Thank God for Our Home in Heaven – John 14:1-6

We have spent this month nurturing a spirit of Thanksgiving, for a Christian is not thankful just one day of the year, but every single day he or she lives. We are Thankful we were rescued, we are thankful for the rescuer, and we are thankful for the church. Today we look up beyond the confines of this world to the world to come; we look to heaven, for there we have an eternal home prepared for us by Jesus himself. This is what Jesus is describing in John 14:1-6.

As Jesus prepared his disciples for his departure from this world, he gave them these words in John 14 as words of encouragement and hope. And where does Jesus point the disciples? He points them to heaven. Let's take a closer look at it today.

When our dog Toby was just a puppy, he used to grab the laces of a leather football and swing it around. The only thing was, the football was bigger than Toby and once the ball started moving it started to throw him around! We would joke that little Toby had bitten off more than he could chew!

Well that might be what I have done this morning. The topic of heaven, is a huge topic. Heaven is mentioned more than 500 times in the Bible and 54 of the 66 books of the Bible mention heaven. But since the words used to describe heaven tell us of a place that is high and lofty and most desirable, I want to know more.

Let's do some myth busting this morning by actually looking at what Jesus says.

First myth is that heaven will be boring!

Science fiction writer Isaac Asimov is quoted as saying, "I don't believe in the afterlife, so I don't have to spend my whole life fearing hell, or fearing heaven even more. For whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven will be worse."¹

Jesus tells his disciples, "Let not your hearts be troubled..." and then he goes on to tell them about a home in heaven he is building for them. "Don't worry about your future," Jesus is saying, "it will only get better!"

Now if you have some kind of distorted image of heaven of all this white robed creatures sitting on clouds and playing harps for eternity, then I can see why you might think heaven is boring. That might work for a cream cheese commercial but it has nothing to do with the Bible.

As David Jeremiah reminds us in his book, "Revealing the Mysteries of Heaven,"

"Heaven will not be boring because God is not boring!... The God we serve is the most exciting, adventuresome, creative Person you can imagine, multiplied a million times over."²

¹ David Jeremiah, "Revealing the Mysteries of Heaven" (San Diego: Turning Point for God, 2020), p. 61

² Ibid, 62-63

Remember who created everything there is, and who inspires those who create today? Could Bach, Beethoven or Mozart have composed anything without the creative help of God? God gave us senses to appreciate sights and sounds and textures and tastes and these will only be heightened in our new bodies. We will enjoy things more, so no doubt God will make more for us to enjoy! Who creates the sunrise and sunsets with all their glory? Who created nature with its infinite variety?

Who led Moses through the Red Sea on dry land? Who brought water from a rock, or rained bread from heaven? Who stood in a fiery furnace with three of his own, and who watched over a prophet thrown to the lions – literally? Who brought down city walls with a song and a shout? Who wrapped himself in a baby sized flesh and bones body? Who fed 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish? Anyone who got near God would describe Him in many ways, but one word that would never be used of God is “Boring!”

Heaven is the place where we come into the presence of God, where we join him in whatever God is doing and experience first hand his joy and delight in creating and loving and giving life.

C.S Lewis, in his book “The Last Battle,” describes the end of the mythical world Narnia and the beginning of Aslan’s country. It is a parable of the end of our earth and the beginning of heaven. As the characters leave one world to enter the next, they are amazed at how familiar heaven was. It was as if they had seen glimpses of it before. Lewis wrote,

“It was the unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right fore-hoof on the ground and neighed, and then he cried: “I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it until now. The reason why we loved old Narnia is that it sometimes looked like this.”³

That which we love most about earth, the things that take our breath away in wonder and awe are the things that might just reflect ever so slightly the beauty and grandeur of heaven. What a thought.

No, heaven will not be boring in the least, so let not your heart be troubled. Even as the disciples needed to see that Jesus’ going was not a time for deep sorrow but rejoicing we too need to see that our leaving earth to go to heaven is not a time of sorrow but of joy.

The second myth is that heaven is not real, it does not exist. Jesus goes on to say, **“In my Father’s House are many rooms (KJV: mansions); if t were not so I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”**

Some people are all caught up in the apocalyptic language of the Book of Revelation where heaven is described as a square city – a huge cube – with gates of pearl and walls of gems and streets of gold. Could that be literal? Sure, though each item tells a story that ties back to the revelation of God throughout scripture. As wonderful as those images are, what really captures

³ C.S. Lewis, “The Chronicles of Narnia” (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001) 758-760.

my attention is the FACT that Jesus has prepared a **home** for me in heaven. There is a place for me to live in heaven and I know it exists because Jesus says it does.

Today there are 26 million refugees in our world today, half of those being children. Each one would love to have a place to call home. Jesus says he has prepared a place for them. 500 people live on the streets of Nanaimo today, and they too would love to have a place to call home, especially on those cold or wet days. Jesus says he has prepared a place for them too.

In 1945, a young Christian businessman stood in a service in Dallas, Texas, and told how he had learned a valuable lesson from a small child. The man said that his business, for a number of months, had been in a steady decline. It looked as if it would completely fail.

Since the situation seemed beyond his ability to understand or control, he found himself slipping into despondency, discouragement and feelings of despair. So one day he decided to get into his car and drive out into the countryside. He traveled for miles, out beyond the busy streets and residential areas and there he came upon a dilapidated cottage. It was in great disrepair with some of the windows replaced with cardboard. Out front was a young girl playing with a doll that was clearly falling apart. Nevertheless, the child seemed content and happy.

He approached the front yard - keeping his distance for fear of frightening the child - and asked, "Little girl, would you tell me how you can be happy living in such a house? It is broken down, and the windows are missing. The doll you have in your hand is broken with the stuffing coming out. How can you be happy?" The little girl looked up with a smiling face and gesturing with her hand said, "Mister, my daddy just came into a lot of money, and he is building us a brand new mansion just over that hilltop."

The young businessman testified that those words pierced his heart. He realized, for the first time, that though his earthly business was faltering, the Heavenly Father had greater things in store for him. It was as though he heard God saying, "Son, don't you know that I have a mansion prepared for you just beyond those clouds?"

The young businessman concluded his story by telling how he went back home with a new determination to live for God and let the heavenly Father take care of the business.

Ira Stanphill, the famed songwriter, was in the audience that evening. He was so moved with the story, he went home still thinking about what he had heard. He rose early the next morning, went to his piano, and wrote the song, "Mansion Over the Hilltop."⁴

Knowing Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us – a place for you, and a place for me, and a place for everyone who will come to him by faith gives hope in the darkest hours, and something to look forward to. It changes our perspective on life. There are many rooms in the Father's house which is Jesus' way of saying, "There is room for you as well!"

⁴ <https://www.staugustine.com/article/20150709/LIFESTYLE/307099986>, accessed Oct. 24, 2020.

So if heaven is such a wonderful place, how do we get there? Final myth: we work hard to be good enough and the doors of heaven will swing open.

Jack Welch, who led General Electric through some of its most successful days, was asked if he thought he would go to heaven. He responded by saying he knew he had made mistakes in life, including two failed marriages, but who knows? If there are any points for caring for people ... and giving life all you've got every day, then I suppose I might have a shot!"⁵

That is **not** how Jesus would have answered that question. The one and only way to heaven is through faith in Jesus. **"I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father (Heaven) except through me." (v. 6)**

People try so many ways to get to heaven, their own ways – good deeds, religion, charity, hard work, and on it goes. But there is only one way and that is through faith in Jesus. This faith is putting all your trust in him and him alone for your salvation. It is realizing we are sinners in need of forgiveness and cleansing. Jesus alone can provide that, and it was through His death and resurrection that our salvation was secured. Look any place else and you will miss the way to heaven.

Heaven is a gift given to all who repent of their sin and find salvation in Jesus. And those who have received the gift of Jesus have their names written in the Lamb's book of life, the reservation list for heaven. Be sure you have responded to God's RSVP.

Those who know they are headed for heaven live differently, face life differently, than those who do not believe in a heaven, or who do not know they are ready to go there. Those who live for heaven lay up treasure in heaven – not on earth. Those who long for heaven always see light at the end of the tunnel; always have hope no matter how difficult circumstances might be. Those who are looking forward to heaven are not distracted by petty agendas, but throw their energy into the great Mission of God, the God who says he desires that none should perish but all come to repentance.

BJ Thomas sang a song back in the 80's that went like this:

They say that heaven's pretty, but living here is too. But if they say that I would have to choose between the two - I'm going home, going home where I belong.

How about you? Do you believe Jesus when he says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled – I go to prepare a place for you – I am the way?" Do you live with the hope of heaven, or do you seldom think about it?

Heaven is nearer than you might think, for Jesus could come and take us home before this day is done. Are you ready? I confess, I wake up many mornings all excited thinking, "This could be the day!" Will you join with me in saying "Thank you God for my home in heaven"?

⁵ Jack Welch with Suzy Welch, "Winning" (New York: Harper Business, 2005) 358-59