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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
May 15, 2022
4th Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: Acts 13:44-52; John 13:31-35

Hymns: 550:1-6; 613; 307; 413:5-6

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Revelation 21:1-6

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ²Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. ⁴And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

⁵Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

⁶And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: What will Heaven be like? Is it real? Is it for sure?

A couple of Sunday's ago we were given a glimpse of what heaven is like now before the final judgment. It was a glorious picture, an actual celebration of salvation that is going on in the heavenly places by all those who have gone before us and are waiting for the resurrection on the last day.

In our text this morning Jesus gives us a glimpse of something even more glorious, a glimpse of eternal life that will follow after the bodily resurrection. The Lord would have us eagerly anticipate --

THEME: The Bliss of Our Heavenly Home.

What's heaven going to be like? Will it be real? Yes, the bliss of heaven will be very real indeed, for the Lord will fashion a –

I. A New Heavens and a New Earth.

There is a TV series on HG TV that's called, "Help, I wrecked my house!" and of course the crew of construction and designer experts come to the rescue and restore the mess the homeowner made of a very nice home. There are exclamations of joy, and even tears of joy as a people are given their first tour of their newly renovated home.

God made a beautiful world and presented it to Adam and Eve that they might take care of it and make this world their home and the home for all their descendants, but it didn't take long before sin entered into the world, and with sin came corruption and all sorts of evil and distress and sadness and pain and death. "Help I wrecked my house!" The world in which we live has been corrupted by sin and death.

As splendid and beautiful and amazing as God's creation continues to be so that we cannot but marvel at its wonders, it is nothing like the world that the Lord declared to be "very good" at the end of the sixth day of creation. We live in a world in which sin and every evil dwells. When we watch the news the evil of this world, man's inhumanity to man and all the vile immorality of the world turns our stomachs. We know so little of the evil in this world and it

upsets us; the Lord knows every cruel and vile sin and transgression, and how deeply it corrupted His beautiful creation.

And yet He sent His only begotten Son into the world to redeem a lost and sinful mankind, that by His grace and through faith in His Son, He might restore us to righteousness and true holiness. And so we live in the hope of heaven which He has promised to all who believe.

That heaven that we look forward to will be amazing beyond words. In fact, our minds cannot comprehend the bliss and glory and majesty of what awaits us. What does the Lord reveal for us in our text? *“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.”* (v.1)

This is a vision, but it is a vision that is intended to communicate the glory of what is to come, and the first thing that Lord wants us to know is that this house that we have wrecked and corrupted with sin will be made new. This has been the Lord’s plan and promise from days of old! He revealed through the Prophet Isaiah: *“Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create.”* (Isaiah 65:17-18)

The Apostle Peter also wrote of this wonder of what is to come in his second epistle: *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”*¹¹ *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*¹² *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*¹³ *Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”*

(2 Peter 3:10-13)

The world and everything in it will be dissolved and melted, and it won’t be a great loss or disaster. It will be a wonder of grace. This world in which sin and evil and death dwells will be removed and

replaced. A new heaven and a new earth will be put in place in which **righteousness** dwells. The corrupting power of sin will be removed and replaced with the glorious impact of righteousness, and only righteousness. We might be tempted to think that this doesn't really answer the question, "What will heaven be like?" but then we can't imagine something more beautiful than the wonders of this world. Something wonderful beyond our experience, beyond our imagination is what lies before us.

But wait. There is more. The Lord gives us this promise, the bliss of heaven will include --

II. Dwelling in the Presence of the Lord.

Now that entails different wonders of grace, wonders of grace that will impact us very personally, both as the group or body of believers, and also individually. Our text relates this wonder of grace to us with these words: "*I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*" (v.2)

The Lord communicates this wonder of grace with a picture we can relate to: a bride adorned for her wedding. The holy city, the New Jerusalem is the group or assembly of all believers from the beginning of the world to the day of Judgment. John saw this assembly of believers as the bride of Christ. The bride of Christ is adorned with splendor and glory. Just as the bride is fussed over by her attendants to adorn her with the perfect beautiful dress and jewelry, and whatever it takes to impress all who see her, so that the groom lights up at the appearance of his bride, so God has adorned His Church to be absolutely beautiful and majestic, adorned with righteousness and glory. All this is to honor the groom, Christ Jesus Himself, as He receives the assembly of believers, the New Jerusalem, into it heavenly home.

Consider the impact on the individual believer. We will be called forth from our graves so that our bodies may be reunited with our spirits which will accompany Jesus on His glorious return. Our resurrected bodies will be different. Remember that our physical beings have languished under the corrupting power of sin, and that will be gone. Paul writes of this wonder in the resurrection chapter

of his First Epistle to the Corinthians: “As we have borne the image of the man of dust, (that is Adam) we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.” (that is Jesus) we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” (1 Corinthians 15: 49,51-53)

We will be changed. We will be glorified. We will be like Jesus after the resurrection when His glory made Him almost, almost unrecognizable to the disciples. But it was Jesus and with His physical body, but He was glorified. What Paul says here is that we shall be glorified. **Now** we are made like Adam and Eve and that is Adam and Eve after the fall into sin. **Then** we shall bear the image of the Lord Jesus Himself.

The Apostle John also wrote of this in his first epistle: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” (1 John 3:2)

Add to this our new living circumstances: “And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.” (v.3)

The perfect relationship that Adam and Eve enjoyed with God before the fall into sin will be restored. The dwelling place of our Lord and God will be with us. Not only will there be perfect harmony, love, and joy, but also a continuous basking in the glory of the Lord. We can't grasp it now, but know this -- it will be wonderful, wonderful beyond words.

Even in our text the wonderfulness is expressed by negatives, as the Lord tells us of all those things that we have in this life that distress us that will no longer be part of our lives in heaven. “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (v.4)

Tears wiped away. Sadness replaced with fulness of joy. Death vanquished, leaving us only with eternal life that has no sorrow, no pain, no disappointment. All those things are gone forever. It is hard to imagine a truly perfect life, but that is what God promises. That is what lies before us.

This is where we need to be careful with our human skepticism. We are taught from our youth, "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is too good to be true."

The whole point of this vision in Revelation is to impress us with the fact that this is --

III. A Sure Thing.

The Lord addresses that in the final two verses of our text: *"Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts."* (v.5-6)

The Lord Jesus affirms that what He has done will have this ultimate effect, He will make all things new. This vision is an accurate depiction of what heaven, and its glory will be like for us and what the experience of living in heaven will be like. It is NOT going to be like life on earth that was spoiled in so many ways by sin. He makes all things new.

Secondly, John was again commanded to write this all done. Why? Because these words are absolutely trustworthy. These words are written that we might set aside our doubts about our eternal future, and rest wholly in the grace and salvation that has come to us in Christ Jesus.

He is the Alpha and the Omega. He has all things under His authority and what was necessary to set this new heavens and new earth in place has been done. IT IS DONE! Christ died for us and redeemed us to God, and Christ rose again the third day and established forever the truth of resurrection. We too shall rise to glory and live with Him in heaven forevermore.

Now and forevermore, Jesus quenches our thirst for righteousness and life with the waters of life, that is this gospel of His love and forgiveness. This grace of His love, and all the blessings of spiritual life flow freely to us through Word and sacrament. Jesus comes to us and refreshes us and renews our faith and keeps us going onward and upward to our heavenly goal. It is a sure thing, as sure as the Lord Himself, as sure as the Lord can make it for us.

Stay in the Word. Stay in the Lord and know what the Lord our Savior God has reserved for us, for each and everyone of us personally and individually in the glories of our heavenly home. It is a sure thing. This is most certainly true!

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)