

“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...” Those are the words that Jesus taught His disciples in response to their request, “Lord, teach us to pray.” I’m not sure that is what I would have asked Jesus to teach me. “Lord, teach me to walk on water. Teach me to raise the dead. Teach me that loaves and fishes trick.” The only thing the disciples ever asked Jesus to teach them was how to pray. Jesus’ response reveals the purpose of life. We are to bring heaven to earth. “Father, enable me to reflect the reality of heaven here on earth.” Many seek Christ in order to get to heaven, but Jesus seeks us in order to get heaven to earth. As citizens of heaven, our job is to reflect God’s kingdom on earth.

Heaven is God’s headquarters from which He rules over His kingdom. The phrase “kingdom of God” denotes the rule of an eternal, sovereign God over all of the universe. The Dutch theologian, Abraham Kuyper, says it this way, **“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!”** But the kingdom of God is also a spiritual rule over the hearts and lives of those who willingly submit to God’s authority. The kingdom is “already but not yet.” The kingdom of heaven was the dominant theme of all of Jesus’ sermons. Heaven is not simply a destination, it’s a mindset, an orientation of the heart embracing the rule of God over our lives.

Paul says it this way, "Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." Philippians 3:20-21. Philippi was several hundred miles from Rome, but it was a Roman colony. The laws were Roman, the entertainment was Roman, the culture was Roman, the dress was Roman. Rome affected life in Philippi. That's in Paul's mind and the Philippians got it. "Hey, we're a colony of heaven. We're an outpost of the kingdom of God on earth and the laws of heaven, and the king of heaven, and the culture of heaven, and the atmosphere of heaven should affect the way we live on earth." We are citizens of heaven, and our goal should be to bring “up there” “down here.” God’s plan for us is that we would make invisible things visible so people can have a foretaste of what God’s heavenly kingdom will be like.

So how do we do that? What would it look like to bring heaven to earth? To answer that we have to think about what heaven will be like. What do we know about heaven that informs how we live in the here and now?

1. Heaven is a place where God is enough. It seems like we never have enough. We get a raise, we want more. We eat a glorious meal, we want more. We take a vacation, we want more. We get a word of praise, we want more. Bob Roberts, “Bob, when will I be enough for you?”

Our wise and loving God refrains from giving us everything we want in this life. **“The settled happiness and security which we all desire, God withholds from us by the very nature of the world...It is not hard to see why. The security we crave would teach us to rest our hearts in this world and oppose any obstacles to our return to God...Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns but will not encourage us to mistake them for home.”** C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God. Our hearts are discontented until we find contentment in God. Does your life convey contentment?

2. Heaven is a place where service is the local currency. Currency is anything to which people assign value or worth. I am holding 3,000 CFAs. This is the currency of Senegal. You know how much this is worth? Nothing in the U.S.! We spend a lot of our lives pursuing cultural currency that is worth nothing in heaven. The currency of heaven is service. Greatness is measured not in terms of net worth or the abundance of possessions but in terms of servanthood...Jn. 13:1-3. If your future is absolutely secure, and absolutely glorious, you are free not to grasp and crave and scratch after power or money or pleasure or praise. You are liberated to love and serve as nobody else loves. Are you known as someone who serves?

3. Heaven is a place where fear is a foreign word. I fear only three things – my past, my present and my future. Fear immobilizes us. Last year I pointed out how the early church grew partly because of the fearless witness of Jesus followers during the pandemics of the 2nd and 3rd centuries. While most people froze in fear, Christians possessed a firm belief that is at the heart of Christian theology - nothing can separate us from life. We can take the gospel to the far reaches of the earth with nothing to fear. Would the people who know you say you are a fearful person?

We have the most difficult places on earth to reach and we have produced the most delicate disciples in the world. Lord, give us men like Jim Elliot who, before he was martyred by the Huaorani in Ecuador, wrote in his journal, **“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”** Jim Elliot

4. Heaven is a place where my past is forgotten. God says He will remember our sins no more. That means your future matters more than your past. Your destiny, not your history is the ultimate ground of your identity. Jesus never asked people about their past. He never asked for their resume. He never put anyone through a battery of psychological tests. He was not interested in how they scored on the DISC test, their Strengths Finder or their Enneagram. “Well Peter, on the Myers-Briggs you are an ESTP and you are pretty red on your Insights test.” Jesus was criticized for this by the Pharisees, “Don’t you see who these people are that you are eating with. Don’t you know where they have been and what they have done?” Jesus simply said, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” You can live free of your history if you have a firm grip on your destiny. Do you spend more time looking in the rear view mirror of your life than out the front window?

5. Heaven is a place where we will be rewarded. There is a prize to be won at the end of the race. I find the prosperity gospel nauseating but let’s not forget that our gospel very much has to do with prosperity. God promises fullness of joy, eternal life, crowns, thrones, crystal rivers, unfading inheritance, white robes, laughter, mountains, songs, angels, feasting, fellowship, eternal light, the undoing of all wrong, the ensuring of all right, and, of course, of God himself resplendent in all his glory. Let’s not close our eyes to this in the name of duty. Rather, let’s listen to the music playing through the cracked door, and take hold of it by faith, letting others know that we wish, more than anything to be with our King forever.

The promise of heaven motivates me to keep running. Azalea run...ready to give up and THEN I heard the finish line. I didn’t see it yet, but I heard it! The guy with the microphone who called us to the starting line was welcoming the runners at the finish line. Began straining...Then I saw Jana’s dad. He was there to welcome me. In a few more days he would die on our front lawn a victim of anaphalaxis. It has been 30 years since his death. We all miss him, but I know where he is. As for me, I will keep running knowing that he will be there at the Finish line. Are you straining for the finish line?

6. Heaven is a place where all my hopes will be fulfilled. “Hope springs eternal in the human heart. Much of our pain in life stems from unfulfilled longing. We all experience disappointments in life. As Mark Buchanan observes, **“The world is booby-trapped. It’s rigged for disappointment. On earth everything falls short of some hoped-for ideal. Everything good down here has a tragic brevity and a funny aftertaste to it. It all falls short and shortly falls apart. None of it possesses any ultimacy...We can become so cynical that we poison ourselves, so self-indulgent that we devour ourselves, so despairing that we collapse into**

ourselves. In fact, self-pity and self-indulgence, boredom and despair, envy and greed – such are only yearning gone sour. They are just the greasy residue that remains after yearning has gone unfulfilled too many times.”

Heaven provides the perspective to overcome my disappointment with this present life. My disappointment only heightens the awareness of the life to come. Do you have the same attitude as Paul when he says, “the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Ro. 8:18

Two questions as we close:

1. Have you made a heavenly reservation? “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.” 1 Jn. 5:13

2. Do you have a heavenly mindset? “Fix your eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18). “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” Col. 3:1-4. “Seek the things above” and “Set your minds on things above.” Seek and set. The first word suggests striving; the second suggests concentrating. We typically gaze at this world and glance at the next. Let’s reverse that – let’s gaze at Heaven and glance at earth.

Someday, heaven WILL come to earth. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . . I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them’” Rev. 21:1-3. As Jesus was God incarnate, so the new earth will be heaven incarnate.

In the meantime, what would happen if everyone in our sphere of influence got a taste of heaven? What would happen if they could see what the kingdom of God is like? They can, if we will show them.

Live like God is enough.

Serve like you have nothing to lose.

Fearlessly share your faith.

Let go of your past.

Run with your eyes on the prize.

Fix your eyes on the unseen until we see Him face to face.

That's the best part of heaven, someday we will see Jesus face to face. What a day that will be.

“William Dyke became blind when he was ten. When he was in his early twenties and attending graduate school in England, he met the daughter of a British admiral, and they fell in love and decided to marry. But before he agreed to give his daughter's hand in marriage the admiral insisted that William submit to what was at that time a risky surgery to restore his sight. William agreed, under one condition: He did not want the gauze removed from his eyes until the moment he met his bride at the altar. He wanted her face to be the first thing he beheld on their wedding day. The surgery took place. The wedding day was set. William's father led his son to the front of the church and the bride's father led her down the aisle. As she came, William's father stood behind his son and unwound the gauze from his eyes. No one knew if the surgery had been successful. When William's bride stood before him, the last strand of gauze was pulled away, and he was face to face with his bride. He stood there speechless, and everyone waited, breathless. And then he spoke: ‘You are more beautiful than I ever imagined.’

One day that will happen to us only the roles will be reversed...One day the Bride of Christ, near blind now, will stand before our Bridegroom at the Wedding Feast and the veil will be removed, the scales will fall away, and we will see Him face-to-face and know Him even as we are fully known. And He will be more beautiful than we ever imagined.” Buchanan, *Things Unseen*, pp. 76-77