

Urban Legends: They're in a Better Place (Heaven)

July 22, 2018

Lynn Haven UMC

Introduction

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” John 14:1-3 (NIV)

When someone we love leaves this earth, the people closest to us gather around to convey their support, extend condolences and offer words of wisdom in the hopes of providing a bit of solace in our time of grieving. You might have even uttered words such as “heaven got another angel” or as we will discuss today, “they are in a better place”, at times such as these. While these sentiments are delivered with the best of intentions, they rarely ease the pain of the loss that is being experienced. They may even be confusing to some folks who have developed a biblical misconception about this “heavenly guarantee” that is waiting for all. Phrases like these take us back to a topic we discussed a few months ago in a sermon series called: Urban Legends. This week we will discuss what this “better place” is really all about as we dive into the only reliable source we possess that is able to reveal the whole truth on this matter: the Bible.

Digging Deeper

Heaven is a better place because it is...

A Place of PERMANENCE.

- Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. Why is heaven a better place? Mainly because it is an eternal house that we get to dwell in with God forever. If you’ve moved around a lot in your life or never felt quite at home anywhere you landed, heaven will take away your transience and provide a security unlike any other. Also, the problems that plague us today in our fallen world like disease, war and death (to name a few) will no longer exist. We will be permanently and eternally secure in God’s grace and love. Nothing we will ever experience here on earth is everlasting. As the old saying goes, “in this world, nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes”. So since the fact that this life is temporary is a definite, how can a heavenly perspective impact your life on earth? Are you able to reconcile what you have done to manage your affairs here with how you will spend eternity? There are many opinions of what heaven will be like but ultimately our final, permanent address will be determined by the steps we take in our current one.

A Place of PEACE.

- “In Heaven there will be no more fear or worry or stress. We won’t need locks on the doors, or bars on the windows, or sophisticated alarm systems – because everything that causes fear will be eliminated. Evil and Satan and death will be banished forever, and we will no longer be threatened, either by nature or by other people. Conflicts and wars will cease, and all the things that divided us on earth will divide us no more.” – Billy Graham. The hope and promise of a peaceful life to come is completely enticing. So why do we spend our lives in conflict with one another? Do you ever feel like you are experiencing God’s kind of peace? Why or why not? How would you personally respond to this challenge: Be anxious for nothing? Do you think that is possible in very difficult times?

A Place of PLEASURE.

- If you want an idea of what heaven might be like just read Revelation 21. What beauty awaits His people in this glorious place! What we have to realize in the here and now is that the things we often chase after that we think will bring pleasure differ greatly from what God deems pleasurable. God delights in His creation, not their creations. Where is your pleasure found? Do you spend a lot of time pursuing the things of this world? What if we dedicated an equal (or greater) amount of time in seeking the Lord? We might find that we can learn to be content no matter our circumstance. Even Helen Keller (who was blind and deaf most of her life) found pleasure in the promise of a restored self in heaven. She is quoted as saying of the Lord that, “He has set in my darkness the lamp of faith; deep, deepest thanks that I have another life to look forward to—a life joyous with light and flowers and heavenly song.” That’s the type of pleasure that will sustain us forever.

A Place of No PAIN.

- “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Revelation 21:4) Pain doesn’t discriminate. We all get to feel it in one way or another at one time or another throughout our lives. So the knowledge that heaven is a place where all of that goes away and we will forever be free from the brokenness of this world is a huge comfort. But there is also some value in suffering. It is in the hardest of times that we are given an opportunity to fully rely on God and strengthen our connection with Him. How has pain (physical or emotional) helped you build a closer relationship with God? How has believing in the promises of heaven as detailed in Revelation help you cope with the turmoil in your life?

A Place of God’s PRESENCE.

- Revelations 21:3 says, “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.” Isn’t it exciting to think of spending every day in the power and presence of the Lord God Almighty?! Aren’t there a million questions you want to ask Him? Do you have a short list in mind of the most pressing ones? Or will any of that even matter at all? Now we must also face the reality that the promise of this heavenly life in His presence is not for everyone. Read Revelation 21:7-8 to discover who will not be in heaven. Sure, it may feel good to tell someone that their loved one is in a better place, but we would be better served to help people live into their victory in Christ while they are still alive so we all are counted in that heavenly roll. Of course, the way to heaven is found through a faith relationship with God through His Son. Jesus answered, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:4-6 (NIV)

Conclusion

We can only speculate about the reality of heaven’s true majesty while we are on this side of it. As Scripture tells us, “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived the things God has prepared for those who love him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9 NIV) The actual beauty of heaven is surely one of those things that cannot be explained with mere words, but rather must be experienced in order to comprehend. When we come face to face with Jesus, what will we see? How will we feel, think, react? Perhaps we will not be able to wrap our minds around the splendor of it all and our overwhelmed hearts will simply fall to our knees in worship. Heaven sounds like a better place indeed and worthy of a lifelong pursuit of the only home that is permanent, peaceful, painless, filled with pleasure and God’s presence!