

## John 14:1-6; A Place Prepared for You

### Introduction

- Recap on When Life Doesn't Make Sense – Mike Minter – the life of Joseph
  - When the Unexpected Happens – Between a Rock and a hard place
  - When the Expected Doesn't Happen – Our motivation should be to NOT sin against God; sin comes at us day by day particularly when we're alone but we are able to resist because of God's grace and our resulting love for God.
  - Getting Over Getting Even – talked about forgiveness; how it will always cost us the right to get even; God gives grace to the humble; when we remember that we are accepted and loved by God, not because we're good people, or even just better than some the rest, but because of His grace to us; This becomes the basis for forgiving others.
  - Being a Vessel of Grace – Summed up by Joseph's words to his brother after their father died, when they worried that Joseph would now get his revenge, Joseph instead spoke words of comfort to them, "Do not worry. I will provide for you and your little ones." Instead of getting even, Joseph chose to be a vessel of the grace he had received.
- **MM also referred often to Hebrews 11, where we're told that these heroes of the faith, Joseph among them, persevered in the hard places in live because they we looking forward to a better country – a heavenly one. And that's what we'll focus on today.**
- Back to John
  - 2 weeks ago, we talked about the betrayal of Judas, Jesus' declaration that Peter would deny even knowing Jesus 3 times that very night, and Jesus' instructions to the disciples to love as Jesus had loved them.
  - This was a new commandment. The OT taught that we should love others as I love myself. Jesus raised the bar and told them, and us, to love others as He has loved us.
  - Chapter 13 ends with Jesus telling Peter that he would disown Jesus 3 times in just the next few hours. SKY reminded us that we are never so close to Jesus that we can't fail – fall flat our face. We are only kept by God's grace. And God's grace is only extended to the humble – He resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.
- MM talked often about being between a Rock and a Hard Place.
  - At the end of chapter 13, all the disciples are in a hard place.
    - One of them will supposedly betray Jesus
    - Peter, one of the Big 3, will deny Jesus 3 times – emphatically.
    - It seemed that Jesus was telling them that He was going to leave them, but they didn't know why or where He was going. (13:36).
    - They were troubled.
- So Jesus looks at these 11 guys, this band of brothers, HIS friends, and tells them this, reading from Chapter 14, beginning in verse 1:
  - 1 "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will

come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way where I am going." 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."

## PRAY

These guys were in that Hard Place

- One had betrayed Jesus; one would deny Jesus; none knew how to follow Jesus.
- Is that us, too? Maybe we won't betray Jesus; but would we ever deny Jesus? And do we know how to follow Jesus?
- So Jesus gives them a promise, a Rock to hold on to. And look at the depth of this promise:
  - He says, "Don't worry. Believe or trust in God. Trust also in me."
  - By reminding them to trust in God, he's drawing their attention to all of the promised of God throughout Scripture:
    - I will never leave or forsake you.
    - Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord.
    - He is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.
    - Jesus reminds them of the promises. We should do that with ourselves and with one another – remind ourselves of God's promises!
  - Then he tells them, "Trust also in me." In the same way that you trust in the promises of God, as your Rock, trust in me also. Trust what I tell you; trust me when I make a promise to you.
  - Do you see what he's implying here? That his promises have the same weight and certainty as God's promises. "Trust in God. Trust also in me."
  - The only way Jesus' promises can have the same weight and certainty as God's promises is if Jesus is Himself God.
  - Here's he's saying, "I am God." And, based on that, here's the promise that I'm making to you.
- I'm going to prepare a place for you. And once it's prepared, I will come again and will take you there so that you can be with me. Here are the elements of that promise:
  - There is a place – a fixed, real place.
  - He is preparing that place just for us.
  - And he will come back and take us to that place to be with him.
- I'll come back to where and what that place is, but first let's focus on the latter part – how we get there. Did you notice that?
  - Do we get to the place Jesus is preparing – heaven, that is – by not betraying Jesus?
  - By not denying Jesus?
  - By following Jesus? It is just a game of 'follow the leader'? Are we the Lost Boys of Neverland following our leader? "We're following our leader, our leader, our leader." Is getting to heaven a matter of effort, determination and careful following?
- No – Jesus tells us that the way to heaven is to have Him come and take you there. That's why he answers Thomas question – "How can we know the way?" – with an

unambiguous, exclusive declaration. “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.” By me, or through me, or because of me. There is no other way to the Father, no other way to get to Heaven because Jesus makes it clear that unless He takes a person to the Father, they can’t get there. That’s why the Christian message is an exclusive message – there cannot be other ways to heaven. The very words of Jesus don’t allow the latitude for that kind of thinking. There is only one way, one truth, one life – I will come and take you. No one comes to the Father except by me.

- These guys are troubled. They are worried about their future. They are rattled to their core with the notion that they might all desert or even betray Jesus; they’re facing the reality that they do not have, in and of themselves, the staying power to faithfully, perfectly follow Jesus.
  - To do what he would do in every situation.
  - To avoid or resist every temptation.
  - To love others as they loved themselves, let alone how Jesus had loved them.
- So Jesus speaks GRACE - to them and to us.
  - You can’t do this; but no worries.
  - Here’s my promise to you – I’ll come and take you to myself so that you can be where I am also.
  - There is no better promise in the Bible – my getting to heaven is completely based on Jesus; not on me. Grace, from first to last.

What a great promise! What a Rock to hold on to when we’re in those hard places – even the hard place of struggling and failing against sin.

But for that promise to give us any encouragement, we need to understand the nature of the place that Jesus is preparing for us. It is a place we’d even be interested in going to?

I want to spend a few minutes talking about heaven. What will it be like? But before I can talk about what heaven will be like, I need to talk about what we’ll be like.

- First, let me clearly state that the Bible teaches that there will be a bodily resurrection, that this very body will be raised to life. Eternal life, as the Bible describes it, is not merely a ‘spirit’ thing but that we will be resurrected body and spirit:
  - Job 19:25-27 - I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes--I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!
  - Romans 8:11 - And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.
  - Phil. 3:20-21 - But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.
  - 1 Thess 4:14-17 - We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According

to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, **and the dead in Christ will rise first.** After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

- The ancient creeds of our faith testify that this has been the orthodox view from the very beginning:
  - The Apostle's Creed, dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century states – I believe in God the Father Almighty... the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.
  - The Athanasian Creed, dating from the 6<sup>th</sup> century states – At Jesus coming all men will rise again with their bodies and shall give account for their own works.
  - The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 32 states – All the dead shall be raised up, with the selfsame bodies.
- I think that the Bible is clear that this is not merely a spiritual resurrection, but a tangible, physical, bodily resurrection.
- And did you notice, back when we read 1 Thess 4, when this bodily resurrection will take place? It tells us that this will happen when Jesus returns, coming down out of heaven. – the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. – I'll fly away, O glory!
- Which leads us to the question – what happens to us between the time we die and the time that Jesus comes back?
  - First, Scripture is clear that when believers die, they immediately go to be with the Lord.
    - 2 Cor 5:8 - We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. – Here Paul equates being away from the body – that is, death – with being with the Lord.
    - Phil 1:23 - I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far. – Paul again equates death – to depart – with being with Jesus.
    - Luke 23:43 – Remember what Jesus said to the repentant thief on the cross - I tell you the truth, **today** you will be with me in paradise.
  - So, we must conclude that, for an intermediate period, we will be with Jesus without our bodies.
    - Rev 6:9-11 - When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

- Notice here we see souls, not bodies, of the Christian martyrs and that they are clearly in heaven, before God.
  - Notice being 'under the altar' – under the blood.
  - But also that they were somehow given robes to wear. But Chapter 6 comes before Chapter 21, which is when we all get to the new heaven and the new earth with our resurrected bodies.
- And, after we are raised with Christ, what will our resurrected bodies be like?
  - I Cor 15:42-44 - So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical (or natural) body (meaning, subject to the characteristics and desires of this age), it is raised a spiritual body (meaning, completely submitted to the Holy Spirit). If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body.
  - Imperishable – not only we will never again die, but our bodies will never wear out or grow old; they'll never be subject to any kind of sickness or disease. They will be completely strong and healthy forever. Imperishable
  - Glory – This contrasts with dishonor and seems to imply so type of beauty, perhaps suggesting that there will be some kind of brightness or radiance surrounding our bodies, somehow reflecting the very glory of God.
  - Power – In contrast to the weakness we now experience, we'll have the strength and stamina that God intended for us. I'm reminded of the passage in Isaiah – we will run and not grow weary; we will walk and not faint.

So, if we'll spend eternity in heaven with a resurrected body, what will heaven be like?

- First and foremost, heaven will be where we see Jesus face to face!
  - 1 Cor 13:12 - For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.
  - 1 Thess 4:17 - we will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.
  - Heaven will mean forever being close to God, no longer separated from Him by our sin and our guilt.
  - Rev 21:3-4 - And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 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.
- And this brings us to a second point; heaven will be a place devoid of sin.
  - Rev 22:3-5 – No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.
  - No curse; no night – symbolizing that there will be no darkness – no sin.
  - Not only will we be free from sin, we'll be free from the temptation to sin and the desire to sin. We will be as pure as God Himself is.
- But tangibility, what will heaven be like? And what will do there?
  - Go Dog Go.

- Many of us have an unspoken, but very real, fear – Here’s how David Lloyd George put it; “When I was a boy, the thought of Heaven used to frighten me more than the thought of Hell. I pictured Heaven as a place where time would be perpetual Sundays, with perpetual services from which there would be no escape.”
- To get a proper view of heaven, I think we need to hold a very high view of the all-encompassing work that Jesus accomplished on the cross.
  - He died for our sins. Yes, indeed. That, in and of itself, is an amazing exchange. His life in exchange for mine. Honestly, I’ll never fully understand or appreciate how or why. But it is a settled fact before God – Christ died for sinners, of whom I am the chief!
  - But the Bible tells us that His death didn’t just buy our pardon but, as we’ve already seen, His death has purchased the resurrection of my body. This sin-ridden rag, Jesus will someday come and take to heaven. And in the process, he will completely remake it. He’ll make it completely new, back to the original design that he had for it way back in Genesis, chapter 1. Remember, after He had made everything else, He made people and only then did He say it was very good. Somehow, the cross of Jesus not only gains me reconciliation with God, but it will also gain me the renewal of my body to its original design.
  - And here’s the last piece. Let me read to you from Romans 8
    - 18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 The creation waits in **eager expectation** for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be **liberated** from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that the **whole creation** has been **groaning** as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
  - Do you see that? – The cross of Jesus not only sets us free, but, one day it will set free the entire creation. When Adam and Eve sinned, the Bible tells us that not only did death and decay come upon us, but it also came upon the whole world. And here, the Bible tells us that the blood of Jesus will rectify that as well.
  - Now the more scholarly among us might ask, “Does Peter write, ‘the heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.’”
    - Yes, but in the context, this comes just after his description of the world having been previously destroyed by the flood; meaning, not the earth no longer existed but rather that it had been cleansed or purged.
    - In Rev 21, John writes, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.” – meaning that the old order, the pattern of futility and decay was gone.

- God designed us, in Adam and Eve, particularly for fellowship with Him in the context of working on this earth as He created it. But then our sin contaminated everything
  - Our relationship with God
  - Our relationship with each other
  - And our relationship with the earth that He created for us to work in.
- Once we sinned, God no longer walked with us in the cool of the evening, after we had done a day's work.
- Once we sinned, we needed to hide from each other, because we were aware of our nakedness. And things quickly degenerated to envy, jealousy and murder.
- Once we sinned, work was no longer the God-ordained joy of working His garden. Instead, there are now thorns and things decay, rust, rot and break.
- But the cross of Jesus changes everything.
  - We can once again have fellowship with God.
  - We can once again be open and vulnerable with each other because we know that we have been forgiven of everything before God.
  - And His word promises that eventually, this broken world will be set free from its bondage to decay.
- Oh, the wonderful cross! When Jesus said I'm going to prepare a place, this is the place and the cross was the preparation!
- And Rev 21/22 points to some very familiar things:
  - A city – but a city not subject to decay or crime, but a city whose Light is the very Presence of God.
  - A river that flows through the city, implying that it's also flowing to some place, just like rivers do now.
  - There are mountains, just as there are now.
  - And there are trees and there will be seasons.
  - Heaven will be familiar to us.

And what will we do in heaven for all eternity? Will we sit alone on clouds and play harps?

- Certainly, there will be worship. It's all over the book of Revelation. But that won't be all that we do. In addition, I'm convinced that we'll **serve**, **relate** and **remember**.
- Rev 22:3 tells us that we will **serve** Him. Now, some might think that serving Him won't happen in heaven because in heaven we're supposed to spend all of our time glorifying God. But Jesus said, in his prayer for us in John 17, "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do." Here, Jesus makes it clear that work, when sanctified and free from sin, is God-glorifying.
- Not only will we work in heaven, serving God, but we will **Relate** to each other. God made us to relate to Him and to relate to each other. Remember, God himself said that it is not good for man to be alone – even when man had God Himself to relate to. Jesus will be glorified in Heaven through our redeemed and sanctified relationships with each other. Jesus even talked of us reclining at a table, at a great feast in Heaven, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That points to relationships among people, not only relating to God.
- This same passage also implies that we'll **Remember**. What good would it do to be at a feast with Jacob and ask him what he thought when he heard that Joseph was

actually alive and in charge of Egypt if Jacob doesn't have a memory. And how can God call us to give an account for what we've done in this life, if we don't remember? And notice again, in Rev 6, that those who were martyred for the testimony of Jesus, still remember that they had been martyred and they knew that justice has not yet been executed.

- But most importantly, I believe that we'll have a memory of our lives here on earth because it will be most honoring to Jesus, the Lamb of God. If we have no memory of this life, and particularly no memory of our sins, how can we possibly appreciate the blood that Jesus shed for me? Rather, I believe that we'll fully remember our present sinfulness and fully recognize it's ugliness (in ways we can't today) because only then will we be able to fully appreciate the gift of eternal life that is ours only because of Jesus' finished work on the cross. We will not look back with regret – the Bible's clear on that. Rather, we'll forever look upon the Lamb of God with gratitude and praise because then, and only then, will we fully appreciate all the spiritual blessings that are ours in Jesus.

I hope that somewhere in all that I've described about heaven, something has caught your heart, your mind, your imagination. Jesus pointed his disciples upward and forward to heaven to encourage them through the hard places in life. The prospect of Heaven should be an encouragement for us just as it has always been for God's people. As Mike Minter repeatedly reminded us this past week – “they were longing for a **better** country - a heavenly one.”

Let me leave you with 4 thoughts; 4 responses to the lure of heaven.

- FARM
- **Fix** your heart and mind on heaven. Col 3:1-3 - Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, FIX your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. FIX your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.
  - We are to fix our hearts and minds on heaven. That's exactly what the heroes of faith did in Hebrews 11. Now, some might be concerned that we'll be so heavenly minded that we'll be no earthly good, but I've yet to see that happen.
  - We are to think about heaven often.
- **Anticipate** – Heaven is something that we are supposed to be looking forward to. If you're not looking forward to it, you either have a wrong vision of heaven or you have too many idols here on earth. Remember the passages we've already looked at about anticipating Jesus' return and going to heaven:
  - The heroes of faith were all anticipating heaven. That's Heb. 11
  - Paul praised the Thessalonians because they were waiting for Jesus to come from heaven. And why do we anticipate his coming? Because Paul says that Jesus rescues us from the coming wrath.
  - Paul reminded the Philippians that our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a Savior from there. Eagerly await – why? Paul says that we wait eagerly because he will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body.



- Roman 8 tells us that even the creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed so that it too can be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.
- Rev 6 tells us that the martyrs in heaven are crying out, 'How long, O Lord?'
- And even Jesus is waiting. Hebrews 10 tells us that even Jesus is waiting, waiting for his enemies to be made his footstool, for by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.
- We should be looking forward to heaven. It's okay to long for it. In fact, it is commended in the Bible
- This anticipation should lead us to **RID** our lives of sin. Paul, in writing to the Colossians, told them that fixing our hearts and minds on heaven should motivate us to rid ourselves of all such things as these – anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips.
  - Peter wrote that our anticipation of heaven and Jesus return should motivate us to “live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of the Lord and speed its coming.”
  - Are you looking forward to that day? If so, it should be motivating you to holy living.
- Finally, the lure of heaven should motivate us to **MISSIONS**. In a beautiful passage concerning our heavenly dwelling in 2 Corinthians 5, Paul writes the following – “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. God gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, we are Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”