

In My Father's House

Heaven

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Amen. Thank you for that, Tom.

Would you turn in your Bibles, please, to Revelation chapter four? As we dismiss our little ones to the wonders of worship program downstairs I decided to change our Scripture reading from John 14 to Revelation chapters four and five this morning.

Let's begin at verse one.

John says:

After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."

Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.

The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"

Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"

And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."

And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.¹

¹ Revelation 4:1—5:14.

Amen.

Let's pray.

Almighty God, very soon now we will join that great multitude. No man knows what a day may bring forth. All flesh is as grass and as the fade of the field, so it perishes. And, Lord, my prayer for us today is that you will give us a little taste, a little hint, a little foretaste of the glory that is in your very presence now. Lord, speak to each heart here, especially comfort those who are mourning. Encourage our hearts this day. We ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

I would like to give you a pop quiz. Take out a blank sheet of paper, pen or pencil. You still get a queasy feeling when you hear that, don't you? It is a pop quiz.

What unique experience did Isaiah, Paul and the apostle John all share? What unique experience did Isaiah, Paul and the apostle Paul John all share? Well, I hope you are able to guess that they were permitted to see heaven and to come back to earth again.

We just read a portion of John's experience. Let's remind ourselves of Isaiah's experience by reading Isaiah chapter six verses one to five, a familiar passage. You may listen as I read or turn to it.

In the year that King Uzziah died [Isaiah says], I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!"

And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."²

What we know of Paul's visit to heaven we learn from 2 Corinthians chapter 12.

The Christians of Corinth had been induced by some false apostles to discount Paul's ministry and teaching because for one thing he was untrained in speech. He was not eloquent in the manner of the Greeks. He did not depend upon the financial support of the Corinthians, for another thing, as other teachers did. So Paul was thrust into the position of defending his apostleship for the sake of the Corinthians.

They would not heed his instruction if they concluded that his authority was not from God.

² Isaiah 6:1-5.

So in the process of defending his apostleship for their sakes, he reveals an incident that he had apparently kept secret for 14 years as something too precious, too personal, too holy to reveal to others. And even as he does, he speaks of himself in the third person as if reluctant to convey the story at all.

Listen to it from 2 Corinthians 12.

It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.³

I would like you to imagine for a moment that you experienced what Isaiah experienced, what the apostle Paul experienced, what the apostle John experienced. I want you to imagine that as you are tidying up your bedroom this afternoon, perhaps making the bed that you left undone in your rush to get to church, you are encompassed suddenly by a great light, brighter than anything you have ever seen. You immediately fall to your knees terrified and you hear a powerful voice saying, “Come up here and I will show you things that will be after this.”

At this point you are quivering in a heap on the floor, covered in the covers and you say to this voice, “I can wait until it is my time to go.”

But immediately you find yourself in the very throne room of heaven and you are surrounded by the sights and sounds and aroma of paradise. You see before you a great throne with a being of light seated upon it whom you know instinctively to be the Lord. There is a color and light, thunder and lightning are proceeding from the throne which is surrounded by what appears to be a rainbow, all of which is reflected in what looks like a great sea of glass in front of the throne. You see these strange creatures with six wings, faces of a lion, calf, eagle and man hovering around the throne giving glory to the one upon the throne. You notice another two dozen thrones straddling the Lord’s, each with a man in white raiment wearing a golden crown. And as you watch, you hear the living creatures proclaim the holiness of God.

And 24 men in their white garments fall to their knees, remove their crowns and join in the chorus of praise.

Some spiritual being beside you, you assume to be an angel, invites you to take a good look around and he escorts you to scenes of such wonder and beauty that they are impossible to describe in earthly terms.

³ 1 Corinthians 12:1-5.

You see a great company of men, women and children of every race arrayed in white robes. And you are told by this angel that they are the redeemed of all ages, purchased at great cost.

As you try to take in the scene you hear a stirring in the vicinity of the 24 elders and living creatures. It is taken up by a great multitude of angels hovering above and below you and it spreads through the vast assembly of the redeemed, the thunderous shout falling upon your ears like a great ocean wave crashing upon the shore.

“Worthy, worthy, worthy] is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”⁴

“Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”⁵

And you are carried along in the praise. You find yourself on your knees giving glory to your Creator and your Redeemer. And you are so joyful, you are so much at peace, you are so much at home that the things that were on your mind just 30 minutes before, finding money for college tuition, your conflict with a coworker, your daughter’s trip to the beach with friends, your son’s summer job search, you mom’s upcoming surgery, the continuing conflict in Iraq, in fact, the United States and planet earth itself, all these things seem to be a lifetime away.

You have so many questions about heaven, so many things to see, so many people to see, so much to experience that when you are told it is time for you to go home, you balk. You say, “I am home. This is where I should be. Why do I have to go back to earth? Please let me stay.”

“No,” the angel says. “You must go back.”

“But why?”

“Your mission is not complete. The plan for you life has not yet fully unfolded. The purposes for which you were put on earth have not yet all been fulfilled.”

“Well, when can I come back here?”

“You will come at the appointed time.”

And then the very next instant you find yourself back in your bedroom. It is still Sunday afternoon. Your bed is still unmade. How do you think that vision of heaven would affect your life? Christian, how do you think that vision of heaven would affect you life?

⁴ Revelation 5:12.

⁵ Revelation 5:13.

Let me suggest that you would from that moment on have a new peace about all the events in your earthly life, a lessened concern for the mundane and the trivial, a decreased interest in worldly advancement, prosperity, amusement, pleasure. Less concern for what people think of you, more concern for what people think of Christ, a new desire to use your time, your gifts and your resources to advance Christ's kingdom, a greater tolerance for pain and persecution because you know them to be temporary, a renewed appreciation of praise and worship, a renewed zeal for the lost. You would have a burden that others would be able to experience the joy that you have tasted. You would have a deeper, richer prayer life. You would be communing with the one that you saw there upon the throne and with the Lamb who was slain.

It could be argued that other things being equal, the degree of real service we render to Christ's kingdom is determined by the degree to which we view Christ's kingdom as real. The degree of real service we render Christ's kingdom is determined by the degree to which we view Christ's kingdom as real.

Joseph Stowell, president of Moody Bible Institute writes, "Eternity for many of us holds little relevance to our every day affairs. We live as though it is theologically real, but irrelevant. In fact, one of the reasons we fail to impact our world may be that for a long time heaven has seemed unimportant to us personally and has nearly disappeared from our liturgy, sermons, hymns, prayers, thoughts, dialog and writing."

In an article in the *Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* Paul Battam agrees. "Neither the medieval emphasis on fear of death nor the confident hopes of the early Christians are much in evidence today. Though few churchmen explicitly repudiate belief in a future life, the virtual absence of references to it in modern hymns, prayers and popular apologetic indicates how little part it plays in the contemporary Christian consciousness."

C S Lewis observed, "A continual looking forward to the eternal world is not, as some modern people think, a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this."

But when we read the words of our Savior, it is clear that heaven was very real to him. And he wanted it to be very real to us.

Turn to Matthew chapter five for a moment. Just look at a few verses here in Matthew five. Verse three.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven."⁶

⁶ Matthew 5:3.

Verse eight.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.”⁷

Verse 11.

Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.⁸

Verse 20.

“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”⁹

Matthew six.

Jesus said:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.¹⁰

Matthew eight verse 11.

“And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”¹¹

When Jesus speaks of his kingdom, he often speaks of it as the kingdom of heaven.

He said, “For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.”¹² The parable of the talents, Matthew 25.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field,”¹³ Matthew 13.

⁷ Matthew 5:8.

⁸ Matthew 5:11-12.

⁹ Matthew 5:20.

¹⁰ Matthew 6:19-21.

¹¹ Matthew 8:11.

¹² Matthew 25:14.

¹³ Matthew 13:24.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed,”¹⁴ Matthew 13.

“...like a king who arranged a marriage for his son,”¹⁵ Matthew 22.

It is like leaven, Jesus said, Matthew 13.

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hid in a field, like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, like a dragnet, all Matthew 13. Like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard, Mathew 20 verse one.

Jesus said, “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven,”¹⁶ Matthew 18.

Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven,”¹⁷ Matthew 19:23.

The mother of James and John asked if her sons might sit on either side of Jesus in his kingdom and he said, “To sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father,”¹⁸ Matthew 20.

Jesus said, “And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it,”¹⁹ Matthew 23:22.

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.²⁰

Matthew 25:31-32.

You will remember that at the last supper Jesus told his disciples, “ I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you [where?] in My Father’s kingdom.”²¹

Jesus said to the high priest, “Hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”²²

¹⁴ Matthew 13:31.

¹⁵ Matthew 22:2.

¹⁶ Matthew 18:10.

¹⁷ Matthew 19:23.

¹⁸ Matthew 20:23.

¹⁹ Matthew 23:22.

²⁰ Matthew 25:31-32.

²¹ Matthew 26:29.

²² Matthew 26:64.

That is just the gospel of Matthew.

In Luke Jesus said, “Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”²³

Don’t rejoice because the demons are subject to you. Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.

Luke 15.

“I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.”²⁴

Luke 16 in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom, a euphemism for heaven. It is a parable, but parables reflect realities.

Luke 22:29.

And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;
That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones
judging the twelve tribes of Israel.²⁵

Luke 22:29.

Luke 23.

“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise,”²⁶ Jesus said to the thief on the cross.

And that passage we were going to read this morning this morning, John 14.

In My Father’s house are many mansions [many dwelling places]; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.²⁷

Luke records in his Acts of the Apostles that Stephen, as he was martyred, “Being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.”²⁸

²³ Luke 10:20.

²⁴ Luke 15:7.

²⁵ Luke 22:29-30.

²⁶ Luke 23:43.

²⁷ John 14:2-3

²⁸ Acts 7:55.

Paul exhorts us to, “Walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”²⁹ 1 Thessalonians 2:12.

And you know that blessed passage in 1 Peter. God, “God... has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”³⁰

John gives us the most detailed description of heaven in all of Scripture in the book we call the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

If heaven is real, the Bible is true, then what we are experiencing now is a temporary transitory phase and our bodies, in which our spirits are housed, are much more like temporary dwelling places like motel rooms or tents, if you will, then like permanent homes.

2 Corinthians chapter five verses one through five.

Paul says:

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.³¹

Isn't that neat?

He hasn't just told us. He has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. That Spirit living inside of you, his Holy Spirit, he is a guarantee that all that he is telling us is true.

You know what it is like to stay in a tent. You use a tent when you are staying somewhere for a short time, when you may have to leave on short notice. You strike the tent. You take off.

We saw the kids at the brigade at Camp Hemlock, battalion, sorry, Camp Hemlock a few weeks ago when I was there with them. I didn't stay in a tent, but the kids were staying in the tents. And I noticed that none of them decorated their tents. You know, they didn't hang up photographs on the wall. I didn't see anybody painting the inside of his tent. It

²⁹ 1 Thessalonians 2:12.

³⁰ 1 Peter 1:3-5.

³¹ 2 Corinthians 5:1-5.

is a temporary dwelling place. They didn't pour a concrete porch, you know, and put out a swing. It is temporary and they knew it was temporary. They knew they would be leaving soon.

After a number of years a tent may become frayed. It may not stand as straight as it once did. It is going to show signs of wear and tear. It may require canvas transplant. But the person inside the tent, the one who is using the tent, he may be as strong as ever. That is why sometimes you may hear an older person say, "You know, my body is a lot slower, but I don't feel any older on the inside."

The tent is wearing thin, but the person inside the tent remains unchanged.

Joseph Stowell, again, writes, "I have heard a lot of older people reflect that sentiment, not feeling older on the inside. Could it be that their feeling is a reflection of the eternal nature of the soul? Our souls do not grow old, but continue in our eternal bodies, a fascinating thought. Eternity is already within us as a pledge of the world to come. It now becomes our privilege to groom our souls for the world to come. In fact, our souls preserve our personal identity and guarantee recognition on the other side."

Along with all the references to heaven in Scripture and the comparison of our bodies to tents, tents in which we sojourn, waiting to be clothed with our resurrected bodies, what other figure is used to drive home the reality of heaven? Well, there is the figure of strangers and pilgrims.

Hebrews 11. They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. In other words, this world is not supposed to be our home. We are just pilgrims.

Now you know what a pilgrim is. He is someone who has traveled. He is going through someplace. He is on his way somewhere. And he might spend the night here, a night there, but he is on his way. He has got a pilgrimage. He has got a place to go to.

God says we are strangers here. We are pilgrims. This is not our world. We are on our way through it. We are just passing through. We are strangers and pilgrims.

Peter writes, "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."³² 1 Peter 2:11-12.

Now if this is not our home, then don't you see, we shouldn't be looking for ultimate fulfillment here, ultimate satisfaction, appreciation or security.

And I worked for a half a century. All I want is a few years of peace, a little time to relax to do some travel, see some things. Is that too much to ask? I have raised these kids. I gave them the best years of my life. All I expect is some appreciation. Why can't I find satisfaction and fulfillment here in my job and in my family?

³² 1 Peter 2:11.

Who told you to expect ultimate satisfaction and fulfillment or security or appreciation here? You will get those things when you reach your destination. God promises.

C S Lewis. "Most people if they had really learned to look into their own hearts would know that they do want and want acutely something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promises."

G K Chesterton put it this way. "The modern philosopher had told me again and again that I was in the right place. And I still felt depressed even in acquiescence. But when I heard that I was in the wrong place my soul sang for joy like a bird in spring. I knew now why I could feel homesick at home."

When I preached to you for the first time about 75 sermons ago now an elderly... I told you about this elderly missionary couple who arrived at their home port after years of faithful service. You remember how at the dock there happened to be a great crowd of people with photographers and there was a band and, I guess, maybe for a fleeting moment they thought that they were being welcomed home, but actually there was an ambassador and his wife who had returned on the ship with them and they were surrounded by a crowd and roses were presented to the ambassador's wife. The photographers documented the event as the ambassador spoke of the joy of serving his government and now coming home.

And as the missionary couple walked unnoticed through the crowd hot tears streamed down the wife's face. "Why is it that we have given our whole lives to Christ? And yet there is no one here to honor us and welcome us home."

Of course, her husband put his arm around her and he said, "Honey, we are not home yet."

When you remember that you are not home yet, you are able to endure temporary hardships. You are able to endure temporary hardships.

A little boy sat quietly in a seat of a coach on a train running between two of the western cities in the US. It was a hot dusty day, very uncomfortable for traveling. And that particular ride was, perhaps, the most uninteresting day's journey in the whole land. But the little fellow sat patiently watching the fields and the fences hurrying by until a motherly old lady leaning forward asked sympathetically, "Aren't you tired of the long ride, dear, and the dust and the heat?"

The lad looked up brightly and replied with a smile. "Yes, ma'am, a little. But I don't mind it much because my father is going to meet me when I get to the end of it."

And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and

scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise.³³

They waited with Abraham for a city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God. Hebrews 11.

If only we knew, if only you were able to be caught up into heaven and you got a glimpse of it and then you were sent back to finish your life here, if only we knew... Of course that is just the point. We do know. We can know. We have it on the authority of Jesus Christ himself.

“If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”³⁴

We know it is true. We need to start living like it is true.

Are you living like heaven is a reality?

Let me close with this.

I know a pastor's wife who was visiting a nursing home and encouraging a woman who had several infirmities since she was very aged and the pastor's wife said, “You know, wouldn't it be great if we could go to sleep one night and wake up with Jesus?”

And the lady replied, “Oh, no, honey. I need 15 minutes to get ready.”

Friend, when God calls you, you may not have 15 minutes to get ready. Let me encourage you to get ready now. And if you are here today and you are not ready, that is, you are not sure what is going to happen to you when you leave this earth, you have no certainty in your heart that you are going to see the Lord. You know about Jesus. You were raised in a Christian home, perhaps. You have been to church. You have heard about Easter and Christmas, but you don't really know for sure. I mean you hope so, but you are not certain.

Friend, if that is your state today, please call the church office and say, “I would like to talk with pastor Russ sometime or talk to pastor Barry or pastor David. I want to be sure. I want to be certain. I don't want to hope I am going to see the Lord. I want to know it.”

I would be happy to sit down with you. We will have lunch. We will pay for the lunch.

³³ Hebrews 11:25-39.

³⁴ John 14:2-3.

Don't worry about that. We will get the tip. We just want to have an opportunity to help you to know for sure that you have everlasting life.

If you are visiting with us today and you don't have an opportunity to do that, we have little booklets that will be available as you leave today. We ask the ushers to put them somewhere where you will see them, a little booklet called *Ultimate Issues*. It talks about these issues of life and death.

Jesus said, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"³⁵

Let's pray.

Oh Father, I pray, first of all, for those who may be here or who may be listening who are outside of Christ, dead in trespasses and sins, those who have no hope, those who are without God in this world. Father, please, only you can do this. We can proclaim your Word. We can spread forth the seed, but, Lord, you are the one who must water it and bless it. You are the one who must breathe upon these dry bones that they might live. You are the only one who can regenerate. You are the only one who can bring about a new birth. We are born again of incorruptible seed by the Word of God. You can do this, Lord. And we plead with you to do it, Father, even as you did it in our hearts. So all of us who are Christians here, we fervently pray right now that you would do a mighty work of grace in the heart of someone where who is still outside of Christ. Give that soul no rest till he finds his rest in you.

And now, Lord, for those of us who do know you, Lord, how we need your help. This world is too much with us. We are living often times as if this place were our home. We build our houses and name things after ourselves and build our businesses. We forget sometimes that we are just passing through. Father, please drive that lesson home to us and give comfort to the hearts of those who are grieving that they might know that they will see their loved one again and that even now he is in a place where there is no sorrow and no tears where he is serving you and glorifying you in your very presence. Lord, may we see it soon? Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

³⁵ Mark 8:36.