

Sermon Series: “What will heaven be like?”

Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN – November 18, 2012

Title: “A Normal Day in Heaven”

Text: **Isaiah 65: 17-25**

Intro.: *Illus.: Marco Polo’s Unbelievable Journey*

Theme: Life in the new heaven and new earth is pictured as one being redeemed from the ravages of sin and one lived out in the full relationship with our God and Savior.

Some things to know before we try to understand the Bible’s descriptions of heaven

- C God’s plan is not to make a “*new and improved*” heaven but rather a radically, **brand new** existence
 - 1. **Isaiah 65: 17**
 - 2. Those who have reached heaven don’t long to go back; rather we should long to go forward to be with them.
- C We are shown a photographically negative picture of heaven to what we presently know
 - 1. “*However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him,”* **1 Corinthians 2: 9**
 - 2. Avoiding speaking **sweet nothings and earthbound triviality** when we talk about heaven.
 - a. “*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” **Matthew 6:21**
 - 3. Longing for a place which **will be better**
 - a. **Isaiah 65: 18**
 - b. **Ills.: Would we be bored with heaven?**
 - c. “*I find it hard to choose between the two. I would like to leave this life and be with Christ. That’s by far the better choice.*” **Philippians 1: 23**
- C Most of the Bibles’ descriptions of heaven are written in poetic imagery
 - 1. Isaiah like many Hebrew poetry writers used literary **hyperbole**
 - a. the art of exaggeration to emphasize what it real
 - b. **Isaiah 65: 19-25**
 - 2. **Isaiah 65: 20** — reality of true living
 - a. Does not teach that infants will die and we will get old (or for that matter that we will be babies and old people)
 - b. Even now it is not who you are on the outside that determines your real life
 - c. “*Whoever is a believer in Christ is a new creation. The old way of living has disappeared. A new way of living has come into existence.*” **2 Corinthians 5:17**
 - 3. **Isaiah 65: 21 & 22**— fulfilled life
 - a. Even our present school work, employment, marriage and child rearing are frustrated by sin’s shortcoming
 - b. “*Here is someone who had worked hard with wisdom, knowledge, and skill. Yet, he must turn over his estate to someone else, who didn’t work for it. Even this is pointless and a terrible tragedy.*” **Ecclesiastes. 2:21**
 - c. Not tying our hope and worth to temporal successes but to our inheritance hidden in heaven with Jesus
 - d. **ILLS.: WILBUR’S BURR OAK TREE (253 Years old makes our life seem insignificant)**
 - e. “*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*” **John 10: 10**
 - 4. **Isaiah 65: 23** — absence of pain
 - a. a relief to every woman who thinks that having to go through labor and delivery
 - 5. **Isaiah 65: 24-25**—removal of the warp of sin in all of God’s creation
 - a. When we are in God’s presence, we will no longer be impacted by sin/its affects which cannot exist with God
 - b. “*the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God . . . 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.*” **Romans 8: 21-23**
 - 6. Curse of sin (Gen 3) on creation, work, childbearing, death is removed by Jesus’ ultimate deliverance in heaven

How should we respond to such great, good news that awaits us in heaven?

- C Rejoice
 - 1. “*But be glad and rejoice forever . . . for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.*” **Isaiah 65: 18**
 - 2. Do others see heaven in your eyes?----do they hear/see/sense the hope that is within you as you await Jesus
 - 3. **Illus.: It’s about coming home**
- C Press forward
 - 1. “*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*” **Philippians 3: 12-14**
 - 2. **Illus.: Pressing on to win the sure prize**

Marco Polo's unbelievable journey

His Italian mother named him after the gospel writer Mark in the hopes that he too would tell the gospel truth. But 13th Century Europeans found it impossible to believe Mark's tales of faraway lands. He claimed that, when he was only seventeen, he took an epic journey lasting a quarter of a century, taking him across the steppes of Russia, the rugged mountains of Afghanistan, the wastelands of Persia, and over the top of the world through the Himalayas. He was the first European to enter China. Through an amazing set of circumstances, he became a favorite of the most powerful ruler on planet earth, the Kublai Khan. Mark saw cities that made European capitals look like roadside villages. The Khan's palace dwarfed the largest castles and cathedrals in Europe. It was so massive that its banquet room alone could seat 6,000 diners at one time, each eating on a plate of pure gold. Mark saw the world's first paper money and marveled at the explosive power of gunpowder. It would be the 18th Century before Europe would manufacture as much steel as China was producing in the year 1267. He became the first Italian to taste that Chinese culinary invention, pasta. As an officer of the Khan's court, he travelled to places no European would see for another 500 years. After serving Kublai Khan for 17 years, Mark began his journey home to Venice, loaded down with gold, silk, and spices. When he arrived home, people dismissed his stories of a mythical place called China. His family priest rebuked him for spinning lies. At his deathbed, his family, friends, and priest begged him to recant his tales of China. But setting his jaw and gasping for breath, Mark spoke his final words, "I have not even told you half of what I saw." Though 13th Century Europeans rejected his stories as the tales of a liar or lunatic, history has proven the truthfulness behind the book he wrote about his adventures—The Travels of Marco Polo. 1300 years before Marco Polo wrote about China, another man, the Apostle John, went on an amazing journey to heaven itself. At times we jaded postmoderns shake our heads in disbelief at the Apostle John's vision and other biblical witnesses to the glory of heaven. But the biblical writers who describe heaven would declare to us, "I have not even told you half of what I saw. Heaven is more joyful, more glorious, and more beautiful than you could ever imagine." May their God-inspired testimonies and descriptions move us to long for God's gift to us in Christ—the glory of heaven. **Dr. Robert Petterson, "All Things New: Our Eternal Home,"**

Would we be bored with heaven?

In April 2012 Time magazine ran a cover story titled "Heaven Can't Wait: Why rethinking the hereafter could make the world a better place." In the next issue, Time printed a letter to the editor from Marc Herbert from Walnut Creek, California, who wrote: *Your story [about heaven] says that 85 percent of Americans believe in heaven. That's incredible. They think of heaven as quiet and peaceful, with no need to do anything. [That] sounds pretty dull to me. What do you do with all of that free time? And it goes on forever and ever!* **Time, "Mail: Rethinking Heaven" (4-30-12)**

How'd You Like to Fall 24 Miles at 834 M.P.H.?

On Sunday, October 14th, Felix Baumgartner, an Australian daredevil, made the highest and fastest jump in history. After seven years of preparation, he completed his daring fall of more than 24 miles, at one point free-falling for over five and half minutes and reaching a maximum speed of 833.9 miles per hour. He broke the previous records set over half a century ago by Joe Kittinger. After his successful fall, Baumgartner said, "It was harder than I expected. Trust me, when you stand up there on top of the world, you become so humble. It's not about breaking records any more. It's not about getting scientific data. It's all about coming home."

Pressing on to win the sure prize

A five-year-old ring bearer was obviously worried as he looked down the long aisle of the church where his aunt was to be married the following day. His grandmother had an idea. "I think I'll give a prize to the person who does the best job tomorrow," she told him. Family members were all holding their breath the next day, but when it was time, the ring bearer performed without a hitch. When his grandmother told him he had won the prize, he was both excited and relieved. "I was pretty sure I had it," he admitted, "until Aunt Dana came in wearing that white dress and the horn was blowing. Then I started thinking--she might win!"

Isaiah 65:17-25 (NIV)

¹⁷ "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.

¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.

²⁰ "Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.

²¹ They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands.

²³ They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them.

²⁴ Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.