

## Sermon for Easter/Sermon Series: From Bethlehem to Calvary to Heaven

Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield—4/11/04

Title: “Victory!”

Text: Revelation 21: 1-7

Intro.: *Ills.: Warped perspectives on Easter: “What Easter means to me” & “Getting to Heaven”*

Theme: Good Friday is to forgiveness as Easter is to the bodily resurrection and heaven.

### ***Easter points to Heaven where all things will be “new” (Print and read Revelation 21: 1-5)***

- New-and-improved or brand new? (vs. 1)
  1. Why heaven, this Easter, is not on most of our spiritual radar scopes
    1. Most of us, today, have so much else on our minds (the ham in the oven, the war in Iraq, our graduation, etc.)
    2. **Ills.: American life-style obscures our view of heaven** (like spiritual smog)
  2. When Jesus came out of the grave, he did not exit with a raised version of the Good Friday body
    1. Jesus came out of the grave with a “glorified body” and the marks of sin “disappeared”
    2. *“Through his power to bring everything under his authority, he will change our humble bodies and make them like his glorified body.” Philip. 3:21*
  3. Our bodies will not be rehabed like bad rerun of *This Old House* but will be transformed to differently new existence
    1. *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.” 1 Cor. 15:42-44*
- What heaven won’t be (vs. 4)
  4. **Ills.: What heaven is not like**
  5. Because we cannot fully comprehend the glories of heaven, God gives us the photographically negative picture
  6. No sin induced grief, tears, or physical pain
    1. No more wrenching in pit of stomach over broken relationships
    2. No ache of deteriorating bodies
    3. No empty black hole in your soul when death invades and steals away your loved one
- What heaven will be
  7. **Print and read Isaiah 65: 17-25**
  8. A faintly familiar but totally redeemed existence
    1. **Ills.: Field of Dreams – “Is this heaven?”**
    2. Activities will be like those on earth but given a heavenly purpose (5)
    3. The unquenchable joy like that of a wedding day celebration (vs. 2)
  9. God “tenting” right in our midst (vs. 3)
    1. Now that Jesus through his death and resurrection has taken stench of sin away, God desires to come among us
    2. Old Testament picture in which tabernacle was placed in the center of Israel’s camp
    3. **Ills.: Tenting as an up-front and personal experience with fellow campers**

### ***Our response to Easter and the victory of heaven (Print and read Revelation 21: 6-7)***

- Because of Easter crave for heaven more than you do anything else in life
  1. “thirst” — ongoing focus for you and your family on heaven (vs. 6)
  2. If you knew a place where no more oil price gouging, no more terrorism, no more dirty clothes and laundry, no more dreaded doctors visits, no dreaded Mondays, no breakdowns in communication with your spouse/child, why not go
    1. *People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were*

*longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. Heb.11:14-16*

3. Talk about it with children and spouse; share it with fellow believers; astound coworkers with confident assurance

#### 1. **Ills.: Where are you going for Spring Break?**

- Because of Easter live as the overwhelming victors that you are

4. *"It is accomplish . . . To the one who overcomes he will inherit these things."* ( vs.6,7)

5. Discipline self to not allow daily grind to drain your mind or catastrophic events of life and world to swamp your joy

6. *No, in all these things we are **more than conquerors** through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Romans 8: 37-39

### **What Easter Means to Me**

A Sunday School teacher asked her class to write one sentence each on "What Easter Means to Me." One pupil wrote: "Egg salad sandwiches for the next two weeks!"...

### **Getting to Heaven**

A Sunday School teacher was talking to her class of young children about believing in Jesus and going to heaven. At the end of her lesson, she asked, "**Where do you want to go?**" "Heaven!" they all piped up." **And what do you have to be to get there?**" "Dead!", one boy yelled.

### **American life-style obscures need of heaven**

For his first sermon in an elementary preaching class, Lawrence, an African student, chose a text describing the joys we'll share when Christ returns and ushers us to our heavenly home. "I've been in the United States for several months now," he began. "I've seen the great wealth that is here—the fine homes and cars and clothes. I've listened to many sermons in churches here, too. But I've yet to hear one sermon about heaven. Because everyone has so much in this country, no one preaches about heaven. People here don't seem to need it. In my country most people have very little, so we preach on heaven all the time. We know how much we need it." **Citation: Bryan Chapell, *The Wonder of It All* (Crossway, 1999); quoted in *Men of Integrity* (January/February 2001)**

### **What is heaven not like?**

I'll never forget a Christian music instructor trying to get some of us junior high guys to behave in a music class. She finally said in exasperation, "You'd better start singing like I'm telling you to sing in this choir, because if you have any plans for going to heaven, that's all we're going to do there!" For a junior high kid, five or ten billion years in choir robes wasn't my idea of a good time! You've heard all the harp stories, the pearly gates, the flowing robes, and you've probably thought heaven was about as exciting as spending your honeymoon in downtown Hammond [IN]. **Citation: Bill Hybels, "Your Ever After: Heaven," *Preaching Today*, Tape 34.**

### **Is this heaven?**

Field of dreams movie clip at 1:34 into the movie.

**Rev. 21:1-7**

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having been made ready as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will dwell (tabernacle) with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>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." <sup>5</sup>He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." <sup>6</sup>He said to me: "It has been accomplished. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. <sup>7</sup>They who overcome will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my child.[NIV]

**Isaiah 65:17-25**

"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. <sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>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. <sup>24</sup>Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. <sup>25</sup>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.