



+ **YOU**

Winter 2022-23
Putting Fear in Its Place

Sermon Title: Joy in Place of Fear

To be used with Session 6: Joy in Place of Fear

Scripture:

Connection with the Study: To complement the small group study *Putting Fear in Its Place*, these sermon outlines will follow the same theme as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

Introduction: I was two years old when my maternal grandfather died. Needless to say, I don't remember much about it. I remember hearing people talk about Grandpa falling and hurting himself while he was painting the house. I also remember riding with my dad while he took Grandma to the hospital, and he said she was going to visit Grandpa. I don't remember where I was when Grandpa died, but I do remember a lot of activity around the house. I also remember a lot of people trying to explain to me that Grandpa had gone to heaven. Naturally, I was too little to understand what that meant. I just know they told me heaven was a nice place, that Grandpa had gone there, and we wouldn't be seeing him anymore.

It's hard for a two-year-old boy to wrap his mind around something like heaven. Now I'm fifty-five years old, and you know what? It's still hard for me to wrap my mind around it! Some theologians say heaven is a "state" rather than a place. I'm not sure what they mean by that, but Jesus said, "I go to prepare a *place* for you." Heaven is indeed a place. The whole idea that God has prepared a place for us—a place where there's no sickness or death or sorrow or pain, a place where we'll live forever—is a wonderful thought that my small mind can't begin to fully understand. What does the Bible tell us about heaven? Why is it so important for us to believe in heaven? What does heaven have to do with the here and now?

I. The mystery of heaven.

A. In Revelation 21, John saw a vision of a new Jerusalem.

1. He said it was like "a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2).

- a. When a woman was getting married, she wore the finest clothing and jewelry she could afford.
- b. John likely used this analogy because it was the most beautiful sight he could imagine.

a. He said it was "pure gold clear as glass" (Rev. 21:18).

- b. "Every kind of jewel." Scholars debate whether these stones were literal or symbolic. One thing is clear: this sight was indescribably beautiful.

B. In chapter 22, John gave a few more details of the new Jerusalem.

1. “The river of the water of life.” Rivers are scarce in some parts of the world, especially rivers of pure water.
 - a. This was obviously no ordinary river since it flowed directly from the throne of God.
 - b. It was “clear as crystal,” so it probably had a sparkle unlike any river John had ever seen on earth.
 - I was a pastor in southeast Missouri for eleven years, and I lived only a few miles from the Mississippi River. It’s a majestic river, but I don’t recommend drinking from it. (They don’t call it “the Big Muddy” for nothing.) On the other hand, streams and creeks of pure water sparkle as they flow over the rocks. They’re a beautiful sight, but how much more beautiful was this “river of life” that John saw!
2. “Tree of life.” The word “tree” does not have a definite article in the Greek, so John may have seen a whole series of trees.
 - a. This would explain why they were on both sides of the river, and why they bore twelve kinds of fruit.
 - b. Unlike earthly trees, they bear fruit year-round.
2. This vision reminds us of some important truths:
 - a. The “river of life” comes from the throne of God, which means He alone is the source of eternal life.
 - b. “The leaves of the tree are for healing the nations.” This reminds us there will be no sickness or disease in heaven. It is a place of eternal healing, and it is available to people of all nations and ethnicities.

II. The magnificence of heaven.

- A. Just how wonderful is this place?
 1. “There will be no more curse”.
 - a. There will be no more sickness or disease.
 - b. There will be no crime or violence.
 - c. There will be no wars.
 - I’m thankful for our military, but combat veterans will be the first to tell you that there’s nothing pleasant about war. My dad fought in World War II, but he very seldom talked about it. In heaven, war will finally be a thing of the past.
 2. God Himself will be in the midst of it.
 - a. John noted there was no temple in the city (21:22), because God will be visibly present.
 - b. “His servants will worship him.” The word translated “worship” normally speaks of religious duties, but it can all encompass all we do as we live for Him (Rom. 12:1).
- B. We will finally be able to look on the face of God.
 1. When Moses asked to see God’s glory, God told him no one could look on His face and live (Ex. 33:20).
 - a. He is holy and we are sinful.

- b. In heaven, sin and death will be gone forever, so we will be able to look at God in all of His glory.
- 2. Heaven will need no sun because the glory of God will be its light.
 - a. This probably refers to what theologians call the *shekinah* glory; that is, the visible presence of God.
 - b. This same “glory of the Lord” lit up the sky when the angel announced Jesus’ birth to the shepherds (Luke 2:9).
 - Skeptics often ask how God could create light before He created the sun (Gen. 1:3, 14-16). It’s not hard to understand when you realize that God Himself is light!

III. The meaning of heaven.

- A. Jesus emphasized the importance of this revelation to John.
 - 1. He assured John that “these sayings are faithful and true.”
 - 2. He told John He was coming “quickly”.
 - a. This does not necessarily mean Jesus is coming immediately (2 Pet. 3:8), but you never know!
 - b. We don’t know when Jesus is coming again, but we should have a sense of expectancy about His return.
- B. Why is it so important for us to keep our eyes on heaven?
 - 1. It reminds us that this world is only temporary.
 - a. The wealth and possessions you accumulate in this world will someday pass away. Only what we do for God will last forever.
 - b. The troubles and trials of this world are also temporary.
 - 2. Heaven reminds us that better days are ahead.

Conclusion: One of the greatest preachers of all time was Dr. R.G. Lee, who served as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis for more than thirty years. He was well-known for his sermon on heaven. Dr. Lee was a very eloquent preacher with a tremendous vocabulary, and he always used a lot of flowery language when he preached. I can only imagine what kind of words he used to describe the glory of heaven.

Adrian Rogers was pastor of Bellevue during Dr. Lee’s final years on earth, and he preached his funeral. He spoke of getting a call from Dr. Lee’s daughter not long before he died. She took care of him during those final days, and he kept slipping in and out of a coma. She said she had been back in his room checking on him when, all of a sudden, he opened his eyes and looked at her. He told her, “I’ve just had a vision of heaven. My preaching never did it justice!”

I’m not nearly as eloquent as R.G. Lee. If his preaching didn’t do justice to the glory of heaven, then my preaching certainly doesn’t do it justice. Even the apostle John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, found it difficult to describe its beauty. Be that as it may, the promise is real. As we face the trials and tribulations of this world, let us keep our eyes on our eternal home, and remember that better days are coming. As an old gospel song reminds us, “Heaven will surely be worth it all.”

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