

I See Everything

Based on Revelation 21:1-5, 22:1-6 | Sermon 5 of 5: The Glory of Heaven
"They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads." — Revelation 22:4

SERMON SUMMARY

This final sermon in the five-part series on heaven began not with theology but with longing. The goal of the series, the sermon reminded us, was never simply to accumulate better data about heaven. It was to grow in our longing for it. We can't live for what we don't long for. And if we walk away with improved information but unchanged hearts — hearts that don't ache and paddle and swim toward Aslan's country — we've missed the point entirely.

The sermon opened with Reepicheep, the courageous mouse in C.S. Lewis's *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, who has carried a longing since childhood for the Far Eastern horizon where the sun rises — for Aslan's country. He declares: "When she sinks, I shall swim east with my four paws. And when I can swim no longer, if I have not reached Aslan's country, I shall sink with my nose to the sunrise." Then he adds: "I don't know what it means, but the spell of it has been on me all my life." That is the posture of a believer toward heaven.

The Text: The Climax of Scripture

Revelation 21-22 is the climax of the book of Revelation, which is itself the climax of all of Scripture, which is itself the vision of the climax of human history. These chapters answer the question not with a cold description but with three layered images — each one deliberately chosen to evoke deep human longing.

Revelation 21:1-4 "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away... 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."

Revelation 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."

God on the throne declares: "I am making everything new" — not all new things, but all things new. This echoes last week's Isaiah 65 and confirms: this is renewal, not replacement. A creation reborn, not discarded.

Three Images of Heaven — and the Longings They Speak To

Image 1: A Glorious Location — and Our Longing for Home

John sees the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, sparkling with the glory of God like jasper and crystal — a cube fifteen miles in every direction (Mount Everest is six miles high), gates of single pearls, streets of transparent gold. This is not literal architecture. It is a man grasping for the most magnificent language available to describe something beyond language: a city radiant with the presence of God.

And within the city, a garden — the river of the water of life, the tree of life bearing twelve crops of fruit, its leaves for the healing of the nations. Eden restored. Paradise regained.

What deep human longing does this speak to? The longing for home. Not a luxury home — though the imagery includes beauty and splendor — but the home where we are safe, known, and loved. The kitchen of a grandmother. The table where we felt held. The place we returned to after long absence. Scripture describes heaven in precisely these terms: Psalm 23's "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." John 14's "my Father's house has many rooms." 2 Corinthians 5's "eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands."

We were exiled from home in the garden of Eden, and we have been longing to return ever since. But Scripture tells us the way home is not backward — it is forward. The heroes of faith in Hebrews were "longing for a better country, a heavenly one."

Image 2: A Joyous Relationship — and Our Longing for Love

John describes the New Jerusalem as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband — the consummation of the covenant that has been unfolding since Genesis 17. Twenty-two times in the Old Testament God promises: "I will be your God, and you will be my people." At the end of history, that promise is finally, fully, permanently kept.

The sermon paused here to note what this speaks to in every human heart: the longing to be truly seen, fully known, and still completely loved. We catch echoes of it in the unconditional love of a parent for a young child. We catch deeper echoes in the intimacy of a marriage. But Tim Keller's insight rang through the sermon: marriage is penultimate. It is a signpost pointing to the real marriage our souls were made for. Married or single, every human being carries a longing for a love that sees them completely and holds them forever.

| **Proverbs 19:22** "What a person desires is unfailing love."

Image 3: A Cosmic Reversal — and Our Longing for Justice and Safety

Heaven is glorious not only for what is there, but for what is permanently absent. No more death. No more mourning. No more crying. No more pain. No more curse. The old order — in which good things keep slipping through our fingers and death gets the last word — has passed away entirely.

The sermon carried this longing through the essay of a woman named Nancy, who described the "small deaths" of life — changing schools, cutting her hair, sending a child off, a glorious sunset ending. These small deaths, she said, are rehearsals for the big ones. She then described standing as a little girl beside the coffin of her best friend. Her father's death. And finally, the death of her seven-year-old son Adam — his body like a living skeleton, his face all eyes, those eyes speaking of worlds of suffering and wisdom.

We do not want that to be the end. We do not want death and cancer and tyrants to have the final word. And God speaks directly to that longing: he will wipe away those tears — not ignore them, wipe them away personally. And everything good will not merely survive — it will be renewed and reborn. All that is sad will become untrue. All good things will never pass away.

The Frosting and the Cake: The True Glory of Heaven

Here the sermon made its most important turn. Home, love, and justice — if these were all heaven offered, it would be enough. But the sermon insisted: these are merely the frosting on the cake. They are not the glory of heaven. They are its byproducts.

The glory of the wedding is not the venue or the flowers or the cake. The glory of the wedding for the bride is the bridegroom.

All through Scripture, there is this ache to see God's face — and this warning that we cannot. Moses pleads to see God's glory in Exodus 33 and is told no one can see his face and live. 1 Timothy 6 describes God as dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. And yet across the same Scriptures, the longing breaks through: Job says "with my own eyes I myself will see him — I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me." Psalm 27 declares "one thing I ask... that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord."

And then Revelation 22:4 answers the whole ache of Scripture in five words: "They will see his face."

Revelation 22:4 "They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads."

The glory of heaven is not the place. It is the person. An infinite God of infinite beauty and love and worth — and unlike any finite person we have ever loved, there is no end to what can be discovered. Every joy leads to a greater joy. Every discovery opens a new one. As Randy Alcorn put it: our longing for heaven is ultimately a longing for God. Being with God is the heart and soul of heaven. Every other heavenly pleasure derives from and points back to his presence. God's greatest gift to us is, and always will be, himself.

Three Things Heaven Does for Us

1. Heaven fuels our hope in bad days. When suffering presses hardest — stage 4 cancer, the death of a child, the grinding weight of a broken world — the eternal glory set before us is not escapism. It is the only weight heavy enough to balance the scales. "Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." Death is the final enemy. But it is the final enemy, not the victorious one.
2. Heaven directs our joy in good days. The joys we experience now are foretastes — signposts pointing to the real destination. C.S. Lewis: Christian pilgrims have the best of both worlds. We have joy whenever this world reminds us of the next, and we take solace whenever it does not. We don't have to grasp at joys frantically, afraid they will slip away. All good things will never pass away. We can receive them with open hands and gratitude.
3. Heaven shapes our mission all our days. What will be has everything to do with what is. We are preparing for life on God's new earth through our Kingdom service. Bibles translated, peoples evangelized, believers renewed, cultures transformed — only eternity will reveal the full significance of what has been done for Christ. Only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last.

The sermon ended as it began: with longing. Nancy's seven-year-old son Adam — surrounded by his Aslan lion, his favorite books, his tape recorder — dying with his bones aching under a soft down comforter. Near the end, he whispered to his mother: "I'm going where Reepicheep went." She whispered back: "Yes. To Aslan's country." And then, just before he died, he opened his eyes wide one last time and spoke his final words: "I see everything. I see everything."

At the center of everything is a someone. And that someone knows your name. He died for you. And because of his death, death is the doorway to a future made whole, centered on a life with God.

Key Takeaway

The glory of heaven is not the place — the shining city, the garden paradise, the absence of tears and death and pain. These are wonderful, and they are real. But they are the frosting. The glory of heaven is the person. They will see his face. An infinite God, infinitely beautiful, infinitely worth knowing, with no end to the discovery. That is heaven. And that someone knows your name.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Take your time. Listen well to each other. There are no wrong answers — only honest ones.

1

The sermon's goal was not better information about heaven, but deeper longing for it. As you finish this five-week series, how has your longing for heaven changed — if at all? Where do you feel more hunger? Where are you still unmoved?

2

Reepicheep says: "I don't know what it means, but the spell of it has been on me all my life." Have you ever felt that kind of unnamed, persistent longing — for something you couldn't quite name or locate? What does the sermon suggest that longing might actually be?

3

The sermon named three deep human longings that the images of heaven speak to: the longing for home, the longing for love, and the longing for justice and safety. Which of these three resonates most personally with you right now, and why?

4

The sermon said home, love, and justice — as wonderful as they are — are just the frosting. The real glory of heaven is seeing God's face. Does that feel like enough to you? Or does it still feel abstract? What would help make the presence of God feel like the deepest longing rather than a theological addition to better things?

5

Nancy's essay described the "small deaths" of life — the endings, the partings, the things that slip away — as rehearsals for the big ones. What small deaths have you experienced that have made you long for a world where good things never pass away? How does "all good things will never pass away" land for you?

6

The sermon said heaven fuels hope in bad days, directs joy in good days, and shapes mission in all our days. Which of these three is most alive for you right now? Which do you most need?

7

Adam's last words were "I see everything." The sermon said at the center of everything is a someone — who knows your name and died for you. What do you imagine it will be like to finally see his face? What do you hope to see?

LIVING IT OUT

We can't live for what we don't long for. This week's invitation is to cultivate that longing — and to let it shape how we live today.

In Your Inner Life

- Read Revelation 21:1-22:6 slowly this week in one sitting. Don't rush the imagery. Let each image — the city, the garden, the river, the tree, the face — sit with you. Ask: which image moves me most? What does that tell me about what I am longing for?
- The sermon said our longing for heaven is ultimately a longing for God. Spend time this week with Psalm 27:4 — "one thing I ask... to gaze on the beauty of the Lord" — and Job 19:25-27 — "with my own eyes I will see him." Let these be prayers, not just readings. Tell God honestly: do I long to see your face? What gets in the way of that longing?
- Reepicheep's longing compelled everything he did. What compels you? What is the thing you are paddling toward? Name it honestly and ask whether heaven — whether the face of God — has any place in that answer.

In Your Closest Relationships

- The sermon described the longing for love — to be fully seen, fully known, and still fully held. Think of the people closest to you. Is there someone who needs to hear, in your specific words, that they are seen and known and loved? Tell them this week — not as a spiritual exercise, but because you mean it.
- Nancy's story of small deaths and big ones is the story every family carries. Is there grief in your close relationships — a loss, a parting, a good thing that has slipped away — that has never been honestly named? Create space for that conversation this week. Grief named is grief that can be carried toward hope.
- The sermon said marriage is penultimate — a signpost pointing to the real love our souls are made for. Whether you are married or single, talk with someone close to you this week about what human love has taught you about the love of God, and where it has pointed beyond itself.

In Your Daily Life and Work

- The sermon closed with the reminder that our Kingdom work echoes into eternity — bibles translated, peoples evangelized, believers renewed, cultures transformed. Look at the work in front of you this week with that lens. What specific thing are you doing that might, in ways you cannot fully see, have eternal significance?
- C.S. Lewis said Christian pilgrims have the best of both worlds — joy when this world reminds us of the next, solace when it doesn't. This week, practice receiving the joys of ordinary life with open hands and gratitude, as foretastes of what is coming — not things to grasp and hold, but gifts to receive and point beyond.
- The sermon said heaven directs our joy by making all good things permanent. Name one good thing in your life right now — a relationship, a beauty, a moment — that you are afraid of losing. Offer it to God this week with the prayer: "this is a foretaste. Help me hold it with open hands, because the real thing is still coming."

In Your Faith Community

- This is the final sermon in a five-week series. Take time this week to reflect on what has shifted in your understanding of heaven across the five sermons. Write down one thing you now believe more deeply, one thing you still find difficult, and one thing that has changed how you live.

- The sermon mentioned that since the series began, three members of the congregation have died. If there is someone in your church community who is grieving a recent loss, bring them something specific from this final sermon this week — not a platitude, but a specific truth: "All that is sad will become untrue. He will wipe every tear. They will see his face."
- Jonathan Edwards said: "It becomes us to spend this life only as a journey toward heaven, to which we should subordinate all other concerns of life." Share that quote with one other person in your congregation this week and ask: what would it look like for us, together, to live as people on that journey?

A Word to Carry

At the center of everything is a someone. And that someone knows your name. He died for you. And because of his death, death is not the end — it is the doorway to a future made whole. They will see his face. One day, so will you.

SERVICE CHALLENGE

Heaven fuels hope in bad days, directs joy in good days, and shapes mission in all our days. This week, carry one of those three gifts to someone who needs it.

This Week's Challenge: Carry the Hope to Someone Who Needs It

Adam whispered "I'm going where Reepicheep went" as he neared death. Someone gave him that hope. Someone gave him that language. This week, be that person for someone.

Step 1 — Choose Your Person.

Think of one person in your life who is in a bad day and needs hope, a good day and needs their joy directed, or in daily mission and needs to know it matters eternally. Write their name down.

Step 2 — Choose Your Gift.

What does this person need most from this sermon? The comfort that death is not the end? The permission to hold good things with open hands? The reminder that their daily work echoes into eternity? Choose one truth and carry it specifically — not generically.

Step 3 — Show Up.

Call, visit, write. Don't wait for the right moment. The sermon began with a mouse who said he would swim until he couldn't swim, and sink with his nose to the sunrise if he had to. That same urgency applies to the people we love who need to know what is coming.

Step 4 — Pray Together.

End with prayer. Pray the specific truth you came to carry. Pray the name of the one on the throne. Ask God to make heaven more real to this person than it was before you arrived.

Step 5 — Come Back and Share.

If you're in a small group or Sunday school class, come ready to share what you did and what you noticed. We finish this series together by carrying its gifts outward — into the grief and joy and mission of everyday life.

Optional Extended Challenge

- Read the final chapter of C.S. Lewis's *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* — specifically the scene where Reepicheep reaches Aslan's country. Then read the ending of *The Last Battle*, which we looked at last week. Let the two endings sit together as a single vision of arrival.
- Look up the essay "Toward a Better Country" in the *Reformed Journal*, which the sermon referenced. Read Nancy's full account. Let her son Adam's final words — "I see everything" — sit with you for the rest of the week as a prayer and a promise.
- Spend one evening this week writing down, as specifically as you can, what you are longing for in heaven — not the generic answers, but the personal ones. The people you hope to see. The ruptures you hope to see healed. The things you hope to understand. The face you hope to finally look at. Keep what you write. Return to it when the bad days come.

Closing Prayer Guide

Whether you're using this in a group or on your own, close by praying through these four things:

- Give thanks — for the five-week journey through this series, for the three congregants who died while it was being preached, and for the certain hope that they now see what we are longing to see.
- Confess honestly — the ways our hearts have been too small, too settled, too comfortable to long for what is coming. The ways we have found our forever home in the wrong places.
- Ask for longing — not just understanding. Ask God to stir in you the longing of Reepicheep, the ache of Job, the yearning of Psalm 27. Ask to be the kind of person who would sink with their nose to the sunrise.
- Pray the covenant — "I will be your God, and you will be my people." Say it out loud together. Let it be both a promise received and a longing expressed. That is heaven in four words.

"At the center of everything is a someone. And that someone knows your name."

— From This Week's Sermon