

Intro:

We don't think about heaven enough. I haven't been able to shake that thought since I heard Warren Wiersbe's observation 3 weeks ago. We don't think about heaven enough. We're preoccupied with the good life here and now. And surely we are more blessed than any people in the history of civilization.

Most of us give little attention to the topic of heaven. Think about it. If you listen to contemporary Christian music, you'll hear very few songs about heaven (or "hymns" for that matter). If you read Christian books and magazines, you'll come across few about heaven. From pulpits, you'll hear few messages preached about heaven.

To the contrary. The focus these days is on how to make life better on earth. There's tons of talk about church growth, and user friendly churches and self-help groups. All the time we hear talk shows about how to raise children, and how to handle your finances. Please don't misunderstand me. I thank God for all of this. It's helpful. But whatever happened to heaven?

I realize there's a danger in being so heavenly minded as to be of no earthly good. But there's an even greater danger to be so earthly minded that we become of no heavenly good! Remember our Lord's warning in Mt 16:26, "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Joni Eareckson Tada wrote an article entitled "What's So Great about the Pearly Gates?" (Disc. Journal, Nov/Dec 93, pp 20ff). You've no doubt heard her on CDR "Joni and Friends." Listen to what she wrote, "God permitted me to travel down a path that led to a broken neck. The suffering I experienced blew out all the lamps in my life that lit up the here and now, and it made Heaven my focus. Now, 26 years later, I'm still inspired by my blind friends who say, 'When I'm finally able to see, the first face I look at will be Jesus.' And deaf friends who smile and hand sign, 'I've never heard the Hallelujah Chorus, but I can't wait to hear the angels sing it.' Their words of faith give substance to things unseen."

"It's a fact. Broken necks, broken homes, and broken hearts crush our hopes that earthly things can satisfy. Only then does the promise of Heaven move our eyes from this world as we realize, once for all, that earth can never meet our deepest longings."

Q: Why do we need to think more about heaven?

Key: Heaven is God's remedy for a troubled heart.

Let's turn to John 14. Last week we finished our 6 week series in John 13 entitled, "Called to be Servants." To be honest I struggled with where to go next. Then I re-read John 14. There's something magnetic and powerful about John 14. The theme is revealed in the first verse.

14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled."

What is God's remedy for a troubled heart? We'll find it in John 14.

The Big Picture: John 14

In John 14, Jesus gave His disciples to indispensable keys for victorious living...

1. Live with the Proper Hope (1-14).
2. Live with the Proper Help (15-31).

Victorious Christians live with the proper hope. What is that? Heaven! They also live in dependence upon the proper help? Who is that? The Holy Spirit!

In the weeks ahead, our aim is to mine the rich treasures contained in John 14. This morning, let's take a close-up look at the first 4 verses.

What is God's remedy for a troubled heart?

Proposition: In John 14:1-4, the Lord Jesus shows us the divine remedy for a troubled heart. We have 2 choices to make if we want to overcome a troubled heart.

- I. Live with a Proper Faith (1).
- II. Live with a Proper Focus (2-4).
 - A. Focus on a Place (2a).
 - B. Focus on a Plan (2b).
 - C. Focus on a Person (3-4).

I. Live with a Proper Faith (1).

V 1 "Let not your hearts be troubled."

The disciples' hearts were troubled. Do you remember why? Their world had just caved in on them. Less than a week earlier they were on cloud 9, when on Palm Sunday they walked at Jesus side and heard the shouts of Hosanna! But tonight there's hopes were dashed. Jesus revealed 3 tragic events on the horizon.

First, He told them that one of the would betray Him (21). Second, He revealed that Peter was going to deny Him (38). But worst of all, He told them He was leaving them, and they couldn't follow Him (33, 36).

Peter felt abandoned. So did John and Matthew and all the rest. They had left all to follow Jesus. They loved Jesus. And now He was leaving them? To top that, He told them He was going to die a criminal's death on a cross (12:32).

No wonder their hearts were troubled!

And then they heard their Master share the first step for dealing with a troubled heart.

V 1 "ye believe in God, believe also in Me."

If we're going to overcome a troubled heart, we need to live with a proper faith. Look carefully at v 1. "Ye believe in God." The KJV translates that as an indicative statement. You already believe in God. Actually, it could just as well be translated as a command (as in NIV, RSV, TEV), "Believe in God."

But what's amazing is what Jesus said next, "Believe also in Me." Trust in Me. Have faith in Me. Every first century Jew knew it was his duty to trust in God. But for a man to exhort others to trust in him the same way they trusted in God was nothing short of a claim to deity.

When someone says, "Trust me," it implies they're either lying or they indeed do have the clout, the authority to do what they promised.

Oh, what those words meant to the troubled hearts of the shocked disciples. "Believe Me. Trust Me. Have faith in Me. I know you don't understand, but trust Me. What I'm going to do is for your good. Trust Me. I'm going to the cross, and though it doesn't make sense to you, trust Me."

There's the first step to overcoming a troubled heart. We must have a proper faith. Listen. A proper faith, a biblical faith, is not an abstract, general, vague sense of believing in God. True faith occurs when we place our confidence in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Listen friends, the Lord Jesus Christ calls you to trust Him. And when we do, He dispels our fear and turmoil.

Quote: Wiersbe, "A burdened heart drives you to the Lord. A troubled heart drives you away from the Lord."

See: Phil 4:6-7 "Be anxious for nothing...and the peace...through Christ"

Q: Is Jesus Christ real in your life? Are you trusting in Him this morning?

Tran: What's God's remedy for a troubled heart? First, live with a Proper Faith.

II. Live with a Proper Focus (2-4).

Q: How do we live with a proper focus?

A: Our Lord instructs us to focus on 3 things.

A. Focus on a Place (2a).

V 2 "In my Father's house..."

Living with a proper focus means, first of all, we focus on a place. Heaven. What is heaven like? Let's do a little inductive Bible study, and observe some bits of information about heaven:

1. Heaven is the Father's house (heaven is where God the Father is).

V 6 "No man comes TO THE FATHER but by Me."

Acts 7:48-49 "Nevertheless, the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands, as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne."

What's a house? A house is where a person lives, a dwelling. Listen friends, heaven is a real place. It's not a figment of someone's imagination.

2. Heaven has "many mansions."

Now I don't mean to burst anyone's bubble. And it's not my intention to ruin a good song for you. But several of the songs we sing about heaven paint a picture of heaven that originates more from the imaginations of the author than from Scripture.

The word "mansions" is a rare word. In v 23 it's translated "abode." It simply means "rooms, abiding places." The greek word is "mona" (verb "meno" meaning "to

abide"). The Vulgate (Latin Bible) used the word "mansiones." That's where the KJV picked up the word "mansions."

If you think heaven will be a place where you'll have your own private, secluded, fenced-in mansion, you'd better rethink. Now don't take me wrong. Heaven will be wonderful. But for a better reason than having your own mansion with valet parking. We'll see that reason in a moment.

Caution: Let's get rid of the idea of heaven we see on the cartoons. When we get to heaven, we won't be disembodied spirits floating around on clouds. True, when a believer dies now, his spirit goes to be with the Lord (II Cor 5:8). But one day, our bodies will be raised from the dead. We will be given glorified bodies. Jesus didn't die merely to save your "soul." He died to redeem your whole person! And listen. Heaven is a real place. It's more real than 1241 Crescent Drive.

Challenge: We need to think about heaven more than we do. We need to focus on the Place of heaven. It'll change our perspective on life.

B. Focus on a Plan (2b).

V 2 "I go to prepare a place for you."

There's a couple of questions I want you to ponder. One is this. The OT teaches that God is in heaven (Isa 66:1-2). If heaven already existed, what is it that Jesus is preparing right now? And another question. Since John 1:3 teaches that Jesus Christ created the universe, and Genesis says He did it in 6 days by merely speaking, why has it taken Him so long to prepare a few rooms? In other words, what is Jesus actually preparing, and why is it taking Him so long?

The answer is obvious when we closely examine what Jesus actually said.

V 2 "I go (am going) to prepare a place for you.

V 3 "And if I go...I will come again."

When Jesus talks about His departure, and His work of preparation, He has in mind His work of redemption. He was thinking about His Father's Plan. It was His Father's Plan to prepare a people for His glory. It was His Father's Plan that His Son would prepare that people, as well as a place for that people, by His work of redemption. Jesus has in mind His entire work, from the Cross to His second coming.

Jesus is not saying, "Listen fellows. I am returning to my Father's house, so that after I get there, I'll be able to get the place ready for you." Rather, He's saying, "I am returning to my Father's house, by means of the Cross and the Empty Grave. I'm going on a redemptive journey. And it's this redemptive journey that is the means by which I'm preparing a place for you." (see Carson, 24)

Someone has said (Bishop Ryle, Disc Journal, Nov/Dec 93, 25), "Heaven is a holy place. Its inhabitants are holy. Its occupations are holy. To be happy in Heaven, it stands to reason we must be prepared for it."

Listen. Sinful people can't go to heaven. But Jesus prepared us for heaven when He carried out God's Plan of redemption.

Key: John 14-17 is known as the Upper Room Discourse. Please listen carefully to the words of D.A. Carson, "The Farewell Discourse must not be treated simplistically, as nothing more than Christian comfort designed to console defeated saints. Rather, it is first and foremost an exposition of the significance of Jesus' 'going away' to His Father via the cross. It is elemental theology, and only as such does it offer encouragement and consolation." (The Farewell Discourse, p. 19)

What's that's mean? This. Jesus wasn't going to give His disciples a worn out cliché when He told them, "Don't be troubled." What He gave them, and us, in John 14-17, is an explanation of the significance of the events that would occur in Jerusalem that weekend: His Death, His Burial, and His Resurrection.

You say, "Ok Pastor, what's the point?" It's this. If we want to experience God's remedy for our troubled hearts, we need to focus on the Plan. We need to ponder what happened 2000 years ago. Constantly. Daily.

Q: How often do you think about the Cross, the Grave, and the Empty tomb?

Q: How often do you think about what Jesus did, is doing, and will do for you?

Illust:

C. Focus on a Person (3-4).

Vv 3-4 "And if I go..."

At first, Jesus' words might be kind of disappointing to you. He said very little about the place He was going to prepare. He didn't tell us what the rooms would look like, or how big they'd be. Why not?

Heaven will be a great place for this reason. Jesus will be there! Heaven is where Jesus is! The focus of Jn 14 is not on the place, but on the Person.

Think about the context. The disciples weren't worrying about what kind of inheritance they'd receive in heaven. At that moment, they had but one thought that weighed on their troubled hearts. They were upset over the prospect of losing Jesus.

Do you know what makes heaven so wonderful. Yes, there will be streets of gold. And no more pain. But what really makes heaven great is this. Jesus is there--v 3 "that where I am, there ye may be also." And if Jesus said it's going to be great, that's good enough for me!

Oh beloved, focus on the Person of Christ! Listen to His amazing promises in vv 3-4: I go. I will prepare a place for you. I will come again. I will receive you. You will be with Me.

What a difference heaven makes!

Illust: (taken from Billy Graham, Facing Death) One of the greatest discoveries of archaeologists in our age occurred in mainland China. More than 7,000 life-sized clay soldiers were unearthed. It's incredible. This royal army was created to protect the grave of China's first emperor, Shih Huang Ti. It's actually equipped with war chariots and weapons of wood and bronze. Horses, harnessed in gold and silver, lie in a pit near the tomb.

Let me ask you something. What does that discovery indicate about the way that emperor viewed death? To him, death was a battleground.

For Buddhists and Hindus, death is merely a transmigration. They believe they will undergo repeated rebirths (taken from Graham's book).

The Taoist treats death with indifference. Islamic belief recognizes 7 heavens, places of carnal pleasure and spiritual bliss. The American Indian culture speaks of the 'Happy Hunting Ground.' Most adherents to Judaism believe in a heaven where good deeds are rewarded.

Q: What is death for the follower of Christ?

A: Death WAS our greatest foe. But Jesus Christ conquered that foe 2000 years ago. Today, we have hope beyond death!

See: I Pt 1:3-4 "...a living hope...reserved in heaven for you."

Q: Why do we talk so little about heaven?

Philip Yancey wrote (from Facing Death and the Life After, Billy Graham), "Although 71% of us believe in an afterlife (says George Gallup), no one much talks about it. Christians believe we will spend eternity in a splendid place called heaven...isn't it a little bizarre that we simply ignore heaven, acting as if it doesn't matter?" Yancey continues, "I have watched in hospital groups as dying patients worked desperately toward a calm stage of acceptance. Strangely, no one ever talked about heaven in those groups; it seemed embarrassing, somehow cowardly."

He's right. What's so strange about talking about heaven?

Key: Heaven is God's remedy for a troubled heart.

Q: Is your heart troubled this morning? May God help us to come to grips with His remedy. Are you living with a Proper Faith? Are you trying to run your own life, or are you trusting in Christ alone? I need to warn you about something. Good people don't go to heaven. Do you know why not? We can't be good enough to go to heaven. We need to trust Christ. He's the way, the truth, and the life.

Are you living with the Proper Focus? We need to think about the Place of heaven more. You'll be a different person if you do. We need to ponder the Plan of God more than we do. And we certainly need to focus on the Person who is above all others, Jesus Christ.

Illust:

Q: Do you know for certain that if you died today, you'd go to heaven?