

Figuring Out Where You're Going

Getting to the Core

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Bible Text: John 14:1-16

Preached on: Sunday, May 20, 2012

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Well, here is an example of someone where there was real confusion about where he was going. And this is the true story of a man from Egypt named Hamdi Hafez al-Nubi And our tech staff investigated the reliability of this, ok? So hopefully I am not going to have to ask your forgiveness next week for being caught in an internet hoax. But here goes.

Hamdi was a 28 year waiter in southern Egypt who suffered a heart attack while working. In line with Islamic tradition, his family took him home and began to prepare his body for burial that Friday evening. The family and friends gathered for the funeral and everybody was really sad and especially because of his youth, just the suddenness of his death. They were all together thinking about what had happened and just like any funeral you and I would go to, where he had gone.

And in Egypt, even though the Muslims want to bury the body as soon as possible, a doctor still has to come and sign the death certificate. I mean, obviously that's just a formality, but an important one I suppose. So the doctor came during the process of the funeral and was surprised to find that the body was still warm. And so she examined Hamdi more carefully and found out that he was in fact still alive, which apparently is one of the reason they take that death certificate step as seriously as they do.

Well, when his mom, who was obviously at the funeral, heard the news, she passed out. So now the doctor has the responsibility of not only trying to revive Hamdi, but also having to do something about his mother, which she was actually able to do. She was actually able to revive both of them. So apparently, at least on this particular day, Hamdi wasn't going anywhere, at least not to his eternal destiny.

Of course, then you have to decide, you know, what exactly do we do next? We are here at the funeral home. All of God's people are together. The guy who was supposed to have died is alive. What is next?

The just deiced to have a party. I mean, everybody is here. It is a great venue. We are going to have a party. And that is exactly what they did.

The media report said, "With the doctor's assistance, both Al-Nubi and his mother were

awakened and soon were celebrating with guests.”

They had the food. They had the room. Let’s have a Hamdi is alive party. And that is exactly what they did.

That is called confusion about where someone is going, huh? For sure. Let’s make that much more serious, though. Way more serious. All of us will have the occasion, unless Christ returns for his own first, all of us are going to face the day when our death certificate has to be signed for real. And then the question becomes: Where are you going?

With that in mind, open your Bible, if you would, to John chapter 14. And if you don’t have a Bible with you, just pull out that one from under the chair in front of you and turn to page 84 of the back section, the New Testament and that ought to bring you to John 14 this morning.

So John 14 or page 84 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you.

We are actually landing the plane on this series we’ve been doing the last six weeks now entitled, “Core Strength. Getting to the Core,” six weeks to focus on things that matter the most. And we started all of this by talking about figuring out what you believe. You have to decide what your source of truth is going to be and that is an individual decision. We live in America. There is great religious freedom here. You can decide whatever you want. We have decided as a church that we believe that the Bible is the Word of God. We think it is inspired. We think it is sufficient. We think it is all we need for life and godliness. And we do understand that from time to time even in the media we might get mocked about that a bit even by public officials may actually throw us under the bus on that particular point, but we are not planning on apologizing for the fact that we are a Bible believing Church.

And when that is working in our favor, great. And when it is not, that is fine, too. But we are not planning on changing that. Our source of truth is the Word of God. So we have, at least as a church family, figured out what we believe. Then figuring out why you are here and then figuring out your identity, who you are and then figuring out who you love. And last week, figuring out what you want and the important place of desires. And now this morning figuring out where you are going.

Now I just wanted to thank those who have started coming to our church since this series began. That is actually one of the reasons we have series like this is it just gives us another opportunity to invite our friends and our coworkers and that sort of thing or just let it be known that we are having this kind of a study in the paper. It is not unusual at all for some persons to come. Maybe they have never had a church home before. Maybe God is working in their heart in some way and so they come because of a special series and they keep coming. Some of them find Christ as Savior and Lord if they didn’t know him before or just become a part of this church family. And if you are on that path, I just

wanted you to say as I land this plane on this series, I am really glad you are here. In fact, you are an answer to our prayer. You really are. You are an answer to our prayer. So thank you very much.

And it is interesting when you et old like me and you can actually look back at people and say, "You know, he came during the such and such series and she came during that particular series." It really gets cool just to watch God draw people together into his church. And so if that is what is going on right now for you, again, you are an answer to our prayers. Thank you for blessing us in that way.

This morning we are talking about, as I said, figuring out where you are going. And in this great passage of Scripture, John 14:1-6 we are going to find three promises that God has made about your eternal home.

In John 14:1.

"Do not let your heart be troubled."¹

And we are not going to get all the way to verse 27 this morning, but if you are in the habit of writing in your Bible, you might want to go down to that verse and circle that exact same phrase. Those are kind of the book ends here. Jesus is concerned about what might have been troubling his disciples at that time.

Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.

Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?"

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."²

What a great passage of Scripture. Huh? Three promises that God has made about your eternal home. It starts right there. The promise that there are many rooms.

I mention in your notes, if you are following along in your bulletin or have printed them off before just whatever. It is really important when we are studying the Bible to always be on the lookout for non routine terms.

You say, "What do you mean by that?"

¹ John 14:1.

² John 14:1-6.

As you are reading a verse of Scripture, look for the words that are used by the Spirit of God that just kind of stand out, that are trying to grab your attention. If you look for the non routine terms, many times you will be able to understand the argument that the writer is making, the flow of thought, the logic and ultimately what it is that God is really trying to emphasize to us. That is especially true right here.

In my Father's house are many mansions, or many dwelling places or many rooms depending on what translation of the Bible you have on your lap.

Well, and my question for you this morning would be: Which one of those words is God wanting to be the primary focus?

In my Father's house are many mansions, or many rooms or many dwelling places.

And I realize for many of us the answer would be: Well, the word mansions, for sure or dwelling place. And so our attention just naturally gravitates there. And pretty soon we are thinking about what our heavenly home is going to be like and how it is going to be decorated and what the features will be and the amenities and if you grew up in church, you start humming that old tune. I have got a mansion, just over the hill. I mean, you know what I am talking about?

Did you get that one on tape?

I would like to present to you this morning that if that is the way we tend to look at this promise, we missed a very important idea. I really believe the key word that needs focus in this particular phrase is the word many. Why would we say that? Well, it is when you consider a promise like this one in the context in which it is given, see what has just happened in the verses that precede the ones that we read this morning? And, by the way, I would encourage you to get in the habit when you are reading something from the Bible or when I ask you to go to a particular passage of Scripture, just to kind of scan as soon as you get there, start scanning on what is it that happened after or before this. What is going to happen after? What is the context of these verses?

Well, what has happened in the verses that precede the ones that I have read and the answer is the early events at the Lord's table. See, John 14 was spoken at the last supper, the passover meal that Jesus celebrated with the disciples before he was taken and tried and then crucified. Well, what was that context? There will be many mansions. Well, the context was just prior to this when they walked into that meal no one was willing to assume the position of servant. And they were too busy arguing about who was going to be greatest in the kingdom of God and who was most qualified to be in charge, blah, blah, blah. And they certainly didn't want to stoop and wash one another's feet because that might put them at a lower level on the pecking order. And so who ended up having to wash their feet? Yeah, Jesus himself, what a terrible thing that Jesus had to do that in that particular position.

So I am saying they had already blown it. And they knew that they had blown it. And then the Lord foretells the betrayal of Judas and then moments later Judas actually shows his unbelieving heart by leaving the table to go and betray Christ. And then in that conversation Jesus actually begins to explain to them, though he had told them before but now again he would be going away and they would not be able to follow him. And then Peter made that boast that he would lay down his life for Christ and Jesus responded that before the cock crowed twice, Peter would deny him three times.

See, think about the context. That was the context in which Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many rooms or many mansions or many dwelling places." What is the context? The answer is: Great uncertainty, uncertainty about their future, what is going to happen after Jesus left, uncertainty about themselves, they had already blown it once and now Jesus is telling them that Peter is going to blow it. What if they fail like Peter is going to fail? And it is in that setting that Jesus spoke these words that we are looking at this morning, words that begin with, "Let not your heart be troubled," words that end in verse 27 with, "Let not your heart be troubled."

Well, what news would calm their heart? They were facing Jesus' departure, their own creaturely weakness. And the answer is that there were plenty of rooms in heaven for them. See, they had trusted Christ. Jesus said, "You believe in God, believe also in me." They had done that. Judas never did. But because you have, in my Father's house, there is room for you.

Another way of stating what we are talking about from that particular part of the promise is that John 14:2 understood in its context is a wonderful testimony of the doctrine of eternal security. In other words, once you genuinely trust Christ as Savior and Lord, that is a gift that is given to you that cannot be lost.

In fact, earlier in this very book John records these words from Jesus' lips.

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them."³

Did you hear that? This is a gift that is given to you by someone who is anything but an Indian giver.

"...and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand."⁴

Do you see it? I mean, it is true to just cascading down. I am the one who gave the gift. They shall never perish. No one shall snatch them out of my hand. In fact:

"My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."⁵

³ John 10:27-28.

⁴ John 10:28.

There is absolutely no way that you can be honest with that text and for a second think that a person could genuinely be saved and somehow do something where he would lose his salvation.

Now we have that same kind of emphasis in this text. Yes, disciples, you blew it by failing to wash one another's feet. And yes I am going away and there is going to be all sorts of additional failures. Peter is going to deny me three times and if a man as bold as Peter is about to deny me, you are all in trouble. But be encouraged by this.

“In My Father's house are many dwelling places.”⁶

And heaven isn't a place for perfect people. Heaven is a place for forgiven people who aren't there because they are clothed in their own righteousness, but they are clothed in the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Now there is a number of ways we can apply that particular part of the passage, but let me just limit it to this. Occasionally I do run across persons—and you may be like that here this morning—and where you would say, “Well, because I have messed up in the past, God can't use me anymore. And so there is no use in trying. There is no use in me attempting to get back on the right track.” And whether they actually doubt their salvation or not, the main issue is they have concluded God no longer has any interest in me. God no longer has any place for me. There is no reason to even try to get out of this sin. There is no reason for me to think that God could ever use me in the future. There is no use for me to even try anymore.

And, listen. On the authority of a wonderful promise in the Word of God, especially viewed in its context of John 13, there is still room for you. And if you have never trusted Christ, God wants you to confess that you are a sinner and trust him as Savior and Lord like right now. And if the words from this passage would not motivate you to do that, I can't imagine what it would take. But if you have genuinely become a believer maybe you did mess up. But I assure you, you have not lost your room. Your reservation was not based on your works. It is not based on your righteousness. That is why Jesus said in verse six:

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”⁷

Another way of saying this is there are no eraser marks in the Lamb's book of life. And I am not advocating that we take a lackadaisical attitude towards sin. I am not advocating that there aren't consequences as a result of sin that are life long. I am not advocating that we shouldn't have qualifications for ministry, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, but right now I am talking about genuine followers of Christ who have messed up. And when and if you do or when and if you have, please don't conclude that you shouldn't try to get back

⁵ John 10:29.

⁶ John 14:2.

⁷ John 14:6.

up. That is the lie of the devil. God wants you to come and ask his forgiveness and God wants you to get back on the right path.

And I realize you might say, “You know, pastor Viars, right now you are preaching cheap grace and you are just going to make it easy for people to sin and ask forgiveness and just do it over and over and over again.” Well, apparently God disagrees. There is no question about the fact that if I were in charge of this deal, it would be a lot different.

Like this. You have to earn it. There is deal number one. Deal number two is I would never let you know for sure if you had it. And deal three, if you ever got out of line for half a second, I would take it back from you. So how do you like the fact that I am not God? I mean, can we all agree on that? Yeah. But, you say, “Well, you are just harsh.”

No I am not. I am pastor Winnie the Pooh. The reason I would say that is I would assume that salvation would have to be lined up that way because that would be the greatest way to motivate people to holiness. See, keep them guessing. Keep them wondering. Keep them trying to earn it their own way and take it away from other people as soon as...

I would assume that would be the best way to motivate people to practical holiness. God disagrees. And God disagrees a lot, does he not? God’s way is that he gives salvation as a free gift and as soon as you trust Christ as Savior and Lord, his righteousness is imputed to you on your account forever. And then he seals you with the Holy Spirit of promise, Ephesians 1:13, and he seals you until the day of Redemption, Ephesians 4:30. And apparently he believes that that is the best way to motivate you to love him in response to what he has given to you in grace. That is the best way to motivate you to choose to live a genuine, authentic life of joy for him and love in him as opposed to cowering down in fear. That is the best way to produce people who genuinely love him. Your place is secure. It is secure in my Father’s house are many, many rooms.

Now what is the second part of this promise? It is also that Jesus is the one who is preparing it.

“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.”⁸

I mean, I want to ask you just to think about that this morning. Imagine what it is going to be like to live in a place that Jesus prepared. That is preparation, right there.

I had the opportunity to travel quite a bit, in fact, I just returned from Minneapolis yesterday. I had been out at or up at Bethlehem Baptist Church where John Piper is the pastor and had the opportunity to do some counseling training, marvelous things happening there, by the way. Unbelievable, absolutely unbelievable ministry opportunities and they would like us to consider a partnership with them in the Dominica Republic. And, I mean, the opportunities for ministry are just absolutely breathtaking.

⁸ John 14:2.

But one of the things that is kind of interesting is when I go and speak like that, many times folks prepare for me and they treat me far better than I deserve. And I am not going to ask you what you think that standard ought to be, but I am just saying they... and, you know, pastor Dutton and Jonathan Smith went out ahead of time and they did a lot of the preparation work on a trip like this.

In fact, just to give you an idea. Yesterday when the guy came up to pick me up at the hotel to take me back over to the church they already had a latte ready for me the way I like. Yeah. And I said, "Ah, you didn't have to do that. Give me that latte."

But one trip that really stands out to me was a couple of years ago when I had the opportunity to speak at commencement at Masters College and Seminary out at Los Angeles. And many of you know, I really appreciate and respect John MacArthur and that is where he pastors and he is the president of Masters. And so it really was an honor and a privilege to be asked to come and be their commencement speaker. But I will tell you. You talk about preparation. They put me in a hotel suite. I could have moved my family in and half of you. I mean, it was just incredible the size. Like what am I supposed to do in here? I mean, just... and huge, beautiful hotel suite. They had a spread of food. I was only there for a day. They had a spread. Every...all the snacks that you could possibly have... it would have taken me a week to eat all of that. I worked on it pretty hard, but, I mean, just amazing.

They had a, you know, a really nice hand written note thanking me for coming and that was displayed in the room. They had a note book that explained every little thing that was going to happen all weekend long, the whole thing, no questions, including how long I had to speak. And just all of that was there.

But the thing about that I appreciated the most was part of the preparation for me was some of you know that John MacArthur has done a study Bible. I use it. I have recommended it a lot. What I didn't know until I went on that trip is they printed a special edition of that. And it was a very limited edition and it was done on incredibly high quality paper with this leather that is just absolutely unbelievable and John and his penmanship... if you have ever seen his penmanship in his books, like where he signed something, it looks like who did that? That is actually the way he writes. If I was writing you wouldn't even be able to read it, but he had written in that Bible really a gracious hand written note. And I thought, that is incredible, that people would take that kind of time of preparation.

And maybe you have been in that situation. Maybe you have gone and you said, "Whoever built that, whoever built this house or built this room or built this building or whoever can prepare something like that is just absolutely phenomenal."

Well, multiply anything you could possibly think of that would go under this heading like a million times and that is what heaven is going to be like, because what the Word of God is telling us this morning is if you know where you are going, if you have trusted Christ

as Savior and Lord, the bottom line is we are talking about a place that Jesus prepared for you.

I want to encourage you to get this book and meditate on it as a family. It is the book *Heaven* by Randy Alcorn. We have used this in some of our Bible studies and {?} groups over the years. It is really wonderful. And the bottom line is the Bible doesn't tell us a lot about the specifics regarding heaven, but it has a lot and it has enough to at least motivate us. And the greatest news is Jesus is preparing it. Can you imagine going to a place and having assurance in your heart that you are going to a place that Jesus prepared?

Some of you know I am a really regimented guy. There is no question about that. I am not even going to try. That is why a book came out this week called *On Counseling the Hard Cases*. And I actually have a chapter in that book. It is published by Broadman and Holman. They asked me to write the chapter on obsessive compulsive disorder. And you can decide why, but anyway, I am a regimented guy. And so I always prepare sermons on Tuesday. It would be very rare for me not to have the message done for that following Sunday by the end of Tuesday. That is just the way I am. So generally on Monday I try to just start reading some passages and reading some commentaries and starting to get into my brain so I am ready to get going on Tuesday morning.

So I was thinking about this early when I got up Tuesdays morning and our habit of our family, Chris and I alternate bringing Andrew over to his bus. Andrew is our adopted special needs son and he meets his bus over here at the community center. And so on the morning I prepared the sermon I left Andrew off at his bus and I helped him up the steps and I just looked at Drew as he was sitting down and then looked at all these other special needs kids on the bus, several of them from this church. And I thought, I can't wait to get to heaven. I can't wait to get to a place where there is no need for a special needs bus and I can't wait to get to a place where there is no cerebral palsy and I can't wait to get to a place where there is no blindness and all these other disabilities that these young kids and sweet kids are facing. And I can't wait to see some of the young people who have grown up in this church and others who now are transformed from all of those difficulties. I can't wait for the day when Andrew can see.

And I have wondered in heaven am I going to have to get some things straightened out with him, because I told him I was handsome. And so how is ...do you have to ask forgiveness in heaven? And will he know now that he is in heaven and I am transformed or will that lie be able to just kind of slip under the rug? I mean, exactly... I mean, I know it boggles your mind.

But don't you long for heaven? Drink on is passage as 1 Peter 1:3.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in

heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.⁹

You might say, “A little while? This is something I am going to be facing the rest of my life.”

Compared to eternity and the promise of heaven, it is still a little while.

...if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.¹⁰

Paul said it this way.

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”¹¹

When I went to Minneapolis I just decided I am not going to drive to Indianapolis to fly to Chicago and then go somewhere else. That makes no sense to me. So I am driving to Chicago if I am going to fly to Chicago. That is kind of my thing. And so I was driving there Friday morning and it also gives me the opportunity, the added benefit, you know what I am going to say. I get to go through Gary and I am ... a guy ought to have that joy once a week.

But anyway, to get you to the point of this is I have some time to talk on my cell phone and call some folks because the traffic is not heavy in Chicago so you can talk on your phone. And so I was calling some of the members of our.... we have a number of members in our church who are not doing well physically at all. And who knows? Nobody knows the time of anybody's life or death and Jesus may return for all of us today. That would be all right, wouldn't it? But if things go the way they appear, we are going to have some dear men and women in this church who will be going to heaven in the coming months and years. And some of them are men and women who have served here faithfully for a long, long time. And humanly speaking they have invested a ton into this church family and I hate to see them suffer. Don't you? I hate to see them suffer.

But I tell you. Thinking about heaven makes all the difference in the world, because

⁹ 1 Peter 1:3-6.

¹⁰ 1 Peter 1:6-9.

¹¹ Romans 8:18.

heaven. The promise of heaven has removed the sting of death. And the bottom line is we cannot take this bodies with us. These bodies have to wear down and the are doing a pretty good job of that, huh? How hard was it to drag yours out of bed this morning. I mean, they are winding down. And for some of our dear members they are winding down quickly and it is sad. And pray for some of their care givers who are loving them and fulfilling their promise they made on their wedding day to be faithful until death do them part. And we need to pray for these caregivers and wrap our arms of love around them and serve tem any way that we possibly can. But the fact of the matter is thinking about heaven is part of even as a pastor what helps me deal with the fact that some of our dear members are in trouble physically.

Now, you know that is all well and good. Everything I have said you would agree with theologically, but I do wonder how much that the thought of heaven prepared by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ excites the average American today. I really think we have to talk about that. Remember a promise only has the intended motivational effect if you value the article that is being promised.

For example, let's say on the way into the auditorium this morning one of the ushers pulled you aside and said, "Listen, if you sit real still during the service, if you sing loud when we are singing, if you listen real close during the message, if you take notes, after the service I will take you up and buy you an anchovy pizza." How many of you would be really motivated by that? And there is probably one weird person here who would say yes. You are probably not going to heaven. But I understand that. But most of us would say, "You know, that doesn't sound real good right now." And I wonder how close that analogy might be to what we are talking about this morning.

I wonder how many American Christians are so in love with the world, they are so entrenched in the world that the thought of heaven doesn't excite them very much. And Jesus gave us this promise because he wants us to be heavenly minded people, to have an eye on eternity, to have a concern about what the Father is doing in heaven. And some of the takeaways of that particular point are I think we ought to pray about heaven. In fact, Jesus taught us that. In Matthew 6:9:

"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.'"¹²

Twice in that short little portion of that instruction of prayer we read about heaven and that goes right along with what we studied last week about desires. Try to get your desires in sync with the Lord's. Well, how do you do that? In part, you pray about heaven and you also think about heaven. Chew on these verses for a moment.

Colossians 3:1-2.

¹² Mathew 6:9-10.

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.¹³

And I would just have to ask you this morning. Are you a heavenly minded person or an earthly minded one? I will tell you. We could replay all the thoughts that you have had all weekend long or all the thoughts you have had in the past seven days. Are you a heavenly minded person or an earthly minded person?

I am to talking about you becoming a monk. I am not talking about you sitting around all day with your Bible on your lap gazing into the heavens. But we have the ability to decide what we love and decide what we treasure and decide what excites us. So we choose. It is not a question about us having a good place or not. We choose whether God's promise of heaven is going to have the motivational effect that our loving Savior intended.

And you might say, "Well, what does that look like? What would a heavenly minded follower of Christ in this day and age look like?"

Well, let me try to tease that out a little bit. I think it ought to affect your morning routine. For an earthly minded person all they are going to do is watch the morning news and read the paper and listen to the radio, whatever. And there is nothing wrong with all those things per se. But the earthly minded person is going to get all caught up in what is happening on the earth and then out the door they go. And no thought of opening the Word of God. No thought of getting a heavenly perspective on the day. No thought of what Jesus wants to see accomplished in this life that day. No thought of planning to live that today like a heaven bound person ought to live. No thought of living faithfully before the people who are not yet on their way to heaven with a desire to reach them for Christ. It is just earthly stuff. Is that you? What about the heavenly minded person?

The fact that Jesus promised heaven, you put that into the equation and that changes everything, doesn't it? For example, the person who wronged you yesterday. Those aren't people to get even with. Those aren't people to exercise vengeance upon. The God of heaven was involved in that and the God of heaven can use their mistreatment for good in your life. So you find yourself praying for those who despitefully use you and you plan to return good for that person today. Why? Because it wasn't an earthly event. The God of heaven is involved. He is up to something. And heavenly minded people factor that into each situation that they face. Or those trials somebody has got to take, the trials that your... it is amazing what you can hear up here.

Some earthly minded person just got a text.

You really ought to turn those things off before you come here to the church house. The trials you are facing, like your pastor mocking you. I mean, heavenly minded people are in the Scriptures. Right? Heavenly minded people are trying to handle those trials

¹³ Colossians 3:1-2.

biblically. We don't believe in chance and circumstance. We believe in the God of heaven.

What about the way you relate to the other people in your life? You don't use them. You don't sin with them or to them. You don't flirt with them. You don't manipulate them. You don't needlessly offend them. Heavenly minded people are trying to win them. And if you honestly believe that heaven is a great place, you are really fired up about the fact that you are going there and you want to take everybody else in your life along with you. It impacts the way you live every day.

Now, lastly, one more promise. Jesus wants you to be there with him. Isn't that amazing?

"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."¹⁴

And there is another number of things about this part of the promise. But I really do think that the fact that Jesus wants us to be with him is absolutely astounding. In fact, in chapter 17 when the Lord is giving his high priestly prayer, he actually prays and he asks his Father that while he is going out of the world and his children are going to be left in the world, he prays that the heavenly Father would bring them to where he is.

On the authority of this passage Jesus wants you to be with him. We are not just talking about the Lord tolerating the fact that we made it to heaven. Here comes that Viars again. He is such a bore. No, Jesus wants me to be with him. Amazing.

When I was growing up my father used to take these annual fishing trips to Canada and he would go with friends of his from the army. He was a hard working man, but once a year he would take a week and go up with his friends to Canada. And when I reached 10 years old, he started taking me. And he took me summer after summer after summer with him and his friends on that trip. And those men became life long friends. But what really amazed me about all of that was that my dad wanted me to be with him, because I actually asked him when I got a little older, "Are you sure, dad? Are you sure you just don't want to be with your buddies?" Because his buddies lived in other places in the country. That was the only time he was going to be with. Are you sure? Because I am find. Are you sure you want me to be? Yeah, I want you to come. In fact, we want you to come. You are now part of the fishing crew.

I am amazed about that to this day that my dad in that setting wanted me to be with him.

Do you know what? Jesus feels that exact same way about you. Isn't that amazing? Jesus feels exactly that way about you. And, friend, if you have never trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, it is possible for you to know that you are on your way to heaven. But you do have to admit your need and you have to place your faith and trust in Christ. And if you

¹⁴ John 14:3.

have never done that, we want to invite you to do that today. We don't have any better news.

You say, "Do you got anything better?"

No. That is it. You can go to heaven.

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life."¹⁵

And if you have never trusted him, why don't you do that today?

Christian friend, we have a way of being way too earthly minded, don't we? Yeah. And I know some of you are struggling. I am just even looking up. I can start pointing at people right here in this service who are in big trouble, suffering greatly. We pray for you. But I hope our understanding of heaven will remind us in just a little while. I thought that when I stepped on Drew's bus this week. Life long, but just a little while. And what comes after the little while, it is going to be really, really good.

Let's stand together for prayer, shall we?

Father in heaven, thank you for the blood of Christ. We are amazed by your grace and the fact that we can know where e are going. And, Lord, what I said earlier about the way I would have designed it, I would have designed it that way, because I would have thought that is what it took to motivate people to do well. You think and know otherwise. So thank you for essentially trusting us with the gift and I pray that we would be good stewards of it in part by learning more and more over time to be heavenly minded people. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

¹⁵ 1 John 5:13.

05/20/12

Getting to the Core #6 - Figuring Out Where You Are Going

- here's an example of someone where there was real confusion about where he was going...
- this is a true story of a man from Egypt named Hamdi Hafez al-Nubi...our tech staff investigated the reliability of this so hopefully I won't have to turn around and ask your forgiveness next week for being caught in an internet hoax...but here goes...
- Hamdi was a 28 year waiter in southern Egypt who suffered a heart attack while working...
- in line with Islamic tradition, his family took him home and began to prepare his body for burial Friday evening...
- the family and friends gathered for the funeral and everyone was so saddened because of his youth and the suddenness of his death...

- so they were all together thinking about what had happened and where Hamdi had gone just like you always would at a funeral...
- In Egypt, even though the Muslims want to bury the body as soon as possible – a doctor still has to sign the death certificate...
- obviously that's just a formality...but an important one I suppose...
- so the doctor came during the process of the funeral and was surprised to find the body still warm...so she examined Hamdi more closely and found out that he was in fact still alive...
 - [which might be one of the reasons they take that death certificate step]...
 - when his mother who was obviously at the funeral heard the news...she immediately passed out...
 - so now the doctor not only has the responsibility of trying to revive Hamdi...now she has to do something about his mother...
- which she was actually able to do...Hamdi wasn't going anywhere, at least on this particular day...
- of course – what do you do next?...you've already got everyone there – so they threw a party...right there where they were having the funeral...it turned out to be a very convenient venue...
- the media report said..."**With the doctor's assistance, both Al-Nubi and his mother were awakened and soon were celebrating with guests.**"
- that's called confusion about where someone is going...
- but let's make that much more serious...all of us will have the occasion – unless Christ returns for His own first...all of us will face the day when our death certificate has to be signed...for real...
 - and then the question becomes – where are you going?...

- with that question in mind, please open your Bible to John chapter 14...page 84 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- this morning we're landing the plane on this series we've been doing...
- **Getting to the Core -- Six Weeks to Focus on Things That Matter Most...**
 - we started by focusing on - **Figuring Out What You Believe**
 - then, **Figuring Out Why You're Here**
 - then **Figuring Out Who You Are**
 - and **Figuring Out Who You Love**
 - last week...**Figuring Out What You Want...**
 - which brings us today to...**Figuring Out Where You're Going...**

- this morning we're thinking about God's promise of heaven.

- in these verses, we find three promises God has made about your eternal home.

- **READ John 14:1-6**

- in these verses, we find **three promises God has made about your eternal home.**

I. There Are Many Rooms

A. Always be on the lookout for “non-routine terms” as you study Scripture.

- a key principle of Bible study is that as you’re reading, always be on the lookout for “non-routine” terms.
- “non-routine” terms are the ones that especially contribute to the overall logic or flow of thought...
 - the point that the writer...and of course ultimately...the point that God is trying to make.
 - in my Father’s house are many mansions, or many rooms.
- question is -- which words in that phrase deserve the primary focus? What should we lock on to the most?
- the answer that many folks would give is --- the word mansions...or rooms.
 - our attention sort of naturally gravitates there...and pretty soon we’re thinking about what our heavenly home is going to be like, decorated like...features, amenities...humming “I’ve got a mansion just over the hilltop...” as if that’s the most significant facet of what our Lord was promising.
- I’d like to present to you this morning that if that’s the way we tend to look at this promise, we’ve missed a very important idea.

- What word in that phrase deserves primary focus?

B. Key word that deserves focus?

- I’d like to present to you that the answer to that question is....the word “**many**”.
- Now you might ask --- why in the world would you say that?
 - the answer is -- because of the context of these verses....
 - what has just happened in the verses that precede the ones we’re looking at?
 - the answer to that is --- the early events at the Lord’s table.
 - John 14 was spoken at the Last Supper....the Passover meal Jesus celebrated with the disciples before He was taken, tried, and crucified.

C. Think about the context of this passage.

- think back over what the Bible says happened that night....in fact it’s recorded in John 13.
- Four main things....
 - 1) **No one was willing to assume the position of servant and wash the other’s feet so the Lord had to do it....**so they had already blown it and Jesus had to model for them how to do it right.
 - 2) **The Lord foretold the betrayal of Judas and moments later Judas showed his unbelieving heart by leaving the table to go and betray Christ.**
 - 3) **Jesus then explained to the disciples that He would be going away, and they would not be able to follow Him.**

4) Then Peter made the boast that he would lay down his life for Christ, to which Jesus responded that before the cock crowed twice, Peter would deny Him three times.

- they were in a position of great uncertainty....
 - uncertainty about their future...what would happen to them after Jesus left...
 - uncertainty about themselves...what would happen to them if they were going to fail the way Jesus said Peter would...
 - In was in that setting that Jesus spoke the words we're looking at this morning, words by the way that began in verse 1 and ended in verse 27 in with the encouragement to "Let not your heart be troubled..."
- what news would calm their hearts when facing Jesus' departure and their own creaturely weakness?
 - that there was plenty of room in heaven for them....
 - they had trusted Christ --- "you believe in God, believe also in me...."
 - Judas never did that, but you have....and because you have...in my father's house....there is room for you.
 - in my Father's house, there are many, many dwelling places...
 - another way of stating what we're talking about from this part of the promise is...John 14:2, understood in its context, is a wonderful testimony to the doctrine of eternal security.
- Earlier John had recorded in chapter 10 where Jesus said..
- **John 10:27-29 - "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."**
 - and now we have the same kind of emphasis....
 - yes, disciples you blew it by failing to be servants....
 - and yes, I'm going away, and there's going to be additional failures...
 - Peter is going to deny me three times, and if a man as bold as Peter will deny me....you're all in trouble.
- but be encouraged by this...
 - In my father's house are many dwelling places....
 - heaven isn't a place for perfect people...heaven is a place for forgiven people---who are there only because they are clothed in the righteousness /// the perfection of Jesus Christ.
- Now, there are a number of ways we could apply this part of the passage....but let me limit it at this point to this...
- Occasionally I'll run across someone who appears to have concluded...
 - because I messed up in the past...God can't use me anymore...
 - there's no use in my trying....
 - there's no use in me attempting to get back on the right track...
 - and whether they actually doubt their salvation or not....
 - the main issue is they've concluded....
 - God no longer has any interest in me....God no longer has a place for me...

- there's no reason to try to get out of this sin....
- there's no reason to me to think that God could ever use me in the future.....There's no use for me to try any more.
- Listen, on the authority of a wonderful promise of God...viewed in its context of the human failure of John 13....
 - there's still room for you.
 - if you've never trusted Christ, God wants you to confess that you're a sinner and trust Him as your savior and Lord.
 - If you have genuinely become a believer...maybe you did mess up ---- but I assure you --- you haven't lost your room---Your reservation is not based on your works...
 - it's not based on your righteousness...
 - that's why in verse 6 Christ said....I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life....no man comes to the father but by me.
- another way of saying this is -- there are no eraser marks in the Lamb's Book of Life.
 - and I'm not advocating that we take a lackadaisical attitude toward sin....
 - if you did, that might very well indicate that you were never genuinely saved in the first place...
 - but right now, I'm talking about genuine believers who have failed...
 - when and if you do....
 - or, when and if you have....
 - please don't conclude that you shouldn't try to get back up...
 - because God wants you to come and ask His forgiveness
 - and God wants you to get back on the right path...
- and apparently Jesus believed that what would motivate them the most to live for Him, and to love Him, and to serve Him...
 - wasn't the threat that if they didn't, they'd lose their place in heaven.
 - instead he said --- your place is secure...in my father's house are many rooms.

- now what's the second part of this promise?

II. Jesus is Preparing It

- In my father's house are many rooms, if it were not so, I would have told you...I am going to prepare a place for you.
- A. Can you imagine what it will be like to live in a place that Jesus prepared?**
 - I appreciate the way people care for me when I travel – I'm often treated very well for sure...
 - but every so often places just stand out...
 - [cf. speaking at Master's College/Seminary commencement – luxury suite at a beautiful CA hotel, array of things to eat and drink – would have taken me a week to eat it all – but especially the special edition of John's study Bible...]
 - I'm sure you too have been to places that are really well built or well prepared...now enhance that 1000 fold and think about what this passage is telling us...Jesus is preparing a place for us...
- I would encourage you to read this book by Randy Alcorn entitled **Heaven...**
- the Bible doesn't tell us a lot of details about heaven—but this book will give you a better understanding of what Scripture does say...

- but when you think about – what else do you need to know – than the fact that Jesus is preparing it?...
- the day I was preparing for this message, I dropped Drew off at his bus-stop Tuesday morning...
- Kris and I alternate the days we drop Drew off here at the CC where his bus meets us...
- and in a pastor's world – you finish one message on Sunday and then you immediately start thinking about what's next ... Sunday is always coming...
- and in my case, I'm very regimented, so I always study on Tuesdays...so anyway, I had been thinking about these ideas...
 - and then stepping onto Drew's bus puts things in an entirely different perspective...
 - sure he may not be able to see – but the day is coming when he is going to be in heaven...
 - and I stepped up on his bus and looked around at the other children...and the phrase that came to my mind was...just a little while...
 - **1 Peter 1:3-9 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.**
 - **Romans 8:18 - For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**
- you know, all of this is well and good....but I wonder how much the thought of a place called heaven...prepared by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...excites the average American Christian today?
 - B. Remember, a promise only has the intended motivational effect if you value the article being promised.**
 - for example...let's say that on the way in to the auditorium this morning. one of the ushers pulled you aside and said....listen...
 - if you'll sit real still during the service...
 - and if you'll sing loud when we're singing...
 - and if you'll listen real close during the message...and even take notes....
 - after the service, I'll take you out and buy you an Anchovy Pizza!
 - now, how many of you would find that motivating? - probably not many of us.
- but I wonder how close that analogy might be to what we're talking about this morning.
- I wonder if many American Christians are so in love with the world that the thought of heaven doesn't excite them very much.
- Jesus gave us this promise about heaven in part because He wants us to be heavenly minded people....to have an eye on eternity....to have a concern about what the Father is doing in heaven....

C. Take aways

1. Pray about heaven.

- **Matthew 6:9-10 - "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.**

- this goes right along with what we studied last week regarding desires...
- seek to get your desires in sync with the Lord – one of the ways we do that is through the way we pray...

2. Think about heaven.

Colossians 3:1-2 - Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

- Friend, I have to ask you --- are you a heavenly minded person or an earthly minded one?
- now I'm not talking about you being a monk...
- not talking about you sitting around all day with your Bible on your lap gazing up into the heavens...
- but you and I have the ability to decide what we love....
- we have the ability to decide what we treasure...
- we have the ability to decide what excites us...
- WE CHOOSE whether God's promise of heaven is going to have the motivational effect that our loving Savior intended...
- Jesus did not pray that we would be taken out of this world....but He does want us to live in a heavenly-minded way....
- He does want us to be appropriately motivated by the promise He's made...
- He does want us to live in a way that His will is done on earth (at least in our lives)...that His will is done on earth as it is in heaven.
- Now, someone might rightly ask --- what might that look like?
 - what does a heavenly minded, godly, growing believer who has been rightly impacted by the promise of heaven look like?
 - 1) It affects your morning routine....
 - for an earthly minded person --- all they'll do is watch the morning news, read the paper, listen to the radio news....
 - not that there's anything wrong with those things in of themselves...
 - but the earthly minded person will get all caught up on what's happening on earth and out the door they go.
 - no thought of opening God's Word....no thought of getting a heavenly perspective on the day....
 - no thought of what Jesus wants to see accomplished in their life that day...
 - no thought of planning to live that day like a HEAVEN BOUND PERSON ought to live
 - no concern about how to faithfully live before, and faithfully witness to people who are not on their way to heaven...

- it's just earthly stuff....

2) Let's think about that person's mind in the morning for a minute...

- what happens internally when that person wakes up?
 - the mind just starts thinking about earthly stuff...
 - it may be worrying and fretting about all the details of the day....
 - it may be planning and scheming about how to get even with the person who wronged them the day before...
 - it may begin immediately thinking about money...namely how they can get more money, and get more money, and get more money
 - it may be all concerned with the hair and the body .. and maybe even dressing provocatively or inappropriately so attention can be drawn to self...

- what about the heavenly minded person?

- my....the fact that Jesus' promise of heaven is in the equation changes everything, doesn't it?

1) The people that wronged you yesterday...

- those aren't people to get even with....
- they're not people you want to exercise vengeance on...
- the God of HEAVEN was involved in that
- He can use their mistreatment for good in your life...
 - so you pray for those who spitefully use you...
 - and you plan to return good for evil with that person today
 - Why? because that wasn't some earthly event ---- the God of heaven is involved.
 - heavenly minded people don't forget that.

2) The trials you're facing...

- heavenly minded people are in the Scriptures...
- they want to handle those trials biblically
- they don't believe in chance and circumstance...
 - they believe in the God of heaven

3) What about the way heavenly minded people treat others....how do people who honestly believe Jesus' promise that they are on their way to heaven because of their faith in Christ....treat the people God has placed around them...

- you better believe this....
 - they don't use them...they don't sin with them...
 - they don't flirt with them...they don't manipulate them...
 - they don't needlessly offend them...heavenly minded people try to win them....
 - people who honestly believe that Jesus is taking them to heaven want to take somebody with them.

- there's one more element of the promise I'd like us to think about:

III. Jesus Wants You to be There With Him.

- John 14:3 - "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.

- there are a number of things about this part of the promise, but perhaps the most astounding is that Jesus wants us to be with Him.
- in fact, in chapter 17....when our Lord is giving His high priestly prayer...

- he actually prays, and asks His Father, that while He was going out of the world...
 - and we His children would be left in the world
 - He prays that the Heavenly father would keep us...
 - and would bring us to heaven...
 - so we could be with Him...just as He is with the Father.
- On the authority of this passage, Jesus Christ wants to be with you, and He wants you to be with Him.

- Isn't that unbelievable...
 - we're not talking about Lord just tolerating the fact that we made it to heaven...(here comes that Viars again, He is such a bore)
 - He wants to be with you.

- When I was growing up, my father used to take annual fishing trips to Canada with some friends of his from the army.
- When I got to be 10 years old, he started taking me along with the group.
- that always had a profound effect on me...that my dad wanted to be with me...
- even when he was around his friends, he wanted to be with me.
 - Ernest Hemingway wrote to a friend and said...
 - To me, heaven would be a big bull ring with me holding two first row seats...
 - And a trout stream outside that no one else was allowed to fish in...
 - And two lovely houses in the town, one where I would have my wife and children and be monogamous and love them truly and well...
 - And one where I would have my nine beautiful mistresses on nine different floors

- What a wicked, selfish view of heaven...

- The greatest thing about heaven is that God will be there, and He wants us to be there with Him.
- that's why Paul said in I Cor. 13 - But now we see in a mirror, dimly...but then, face to face.
- the thought of seeing his Savior was a wonderful motivation to Paul.

- Friend, if you've not trusted Christ...would you trust Him today?
- this promise is only for those who have believed in Christ...I am the way...
 - why don't you come to him today?

- Believing friend....how does God want his promise of heaven to impact your heart and life?
- What would be different if your belief in this promise became more real.

- You'll never have to say --- I don't have a home.

- When I finished seminary, Kris and I were excited about getting right into the ministry.
- I was going to work on one more degree part time in Philadelphia, but I had also taken a position at a church and Christian School in Trenton, NJ.
- I had some friends who were already working there, and I asked them to find Kris and I an apartment....no reason to waste a trip going out first....they could surely find us something.
 - of course, at the time, they were all bachelors....but they could get the job done.

- We also knew we were going to be tight on funds...
 - Kris had been working to put me through graduate school, and we had barely stayed ahead of the next tuition bill...
 - Also my starting salary at this ministry was going to be \$15,000 a year.
 - So I instructed my friends to find a place that was reasonable (which on the East Coast is not a word that goes with housing very well)
- So they found a place, and the day after Christmas, we loaded all our things in a Ryder truck and headed for NJ.
- We decided to drive all night since we were really excited about getting there...(at least that's the way I remember this part of the story...you may want to verify this with my wife Kris)
- I hadn't thought about the fact that it would take longer to drive a moving van than it would have taken driving a car.
- Nor did I think about the fact that it could be bad weather that time of year...which it was....which we hit in the middle of the night.
- To make a long story short, the truck had previously been in an accident so the door wouldn't close....the heater didn't work....we got lost once we got into NJ....
- but at least we were going to get to move into our new home....
- we drive up to the place my friends had reserved....and let's just say it didn't have a lot of curb appeal.
- we found the manager and got the key...and he mentioned how sorry he was that they hadn't had time to clean it up....but that the previous people wouldn't move out so they had to evict them.
- his recommendation was that we move in all our things and they would be happy to clean up around us.
- We opened the door to that apartment and could not believe the stench.
- We walked into the kitchen and it looked like it hadn't been cleaned in years...
- Kris is looking at me....I am looking at her....
 - I am definitely glad the kitchen utensils had not been unpacked at that time...I'm not sure what might have happened with the butcher knife...
 - but the kicker was this...Kris walks into the bathroom....and says...Steve...
(we had been married long enough that I knew what that meant....Steve....)
 - I walked into the bathroom --- and apparently the person in the apartment above us had had a fairly good sized leak in his bathroom....because the drywall had caved in, and you could actually look up through the hole and see his bathroom.
- Without going into a lot more detail...we decided not to take that apartment, and thanked the man for his time.
- But what I remember about that event the most, even though it happened over twelve years ago, was the sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach...
 - as we walked back to the truck...
 - it was just getting dark, and we thought....we don't have a home....we don't have anywhere to go.

- see, can you imagine that?...Can you imagine anything worse than that?
- the answer is "yes"
 - because there are many men and women who live in our town, who live in our state, who live in our country, who live in our world....
 - who don't know where they're going to live in eternity....
 - they're unsure of their eternal home...
 - but that will never be true of His children.
 - Because you know where you're going...