

SERMON

Grace Street Fellowship, Dr. Jim Burgin, pastor
Sunday, April 29th, 2018

Series: "It's Not Complicated." Part IV – Eternal Life

John 3:16-17 – "Whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him."

OPENING

I grew up in a day where there were very few basic colors. Today, wow! I have hundreds of colors on my InDesign palette – and that's just the reds. ☺ Have you heard of these colors?

1. Sarcoline – "flesh colored – Here's a tip that I read: "Wearing sarcoline high heels makes your legs look longer. Microsoft Word keeps trying to correct these colors, because apparently, it hasn't heard of them either;
2. Coquelicot – another word for poppy, coquelicot if the flower's orange-tinted red color.
3. Smaragdine – it mean emerald green, and it was the 2013 Pantone Color of the Year;
4. Glaucous – first used as a color name in 1671, but it's more than a hue. It describes the powdery, and perfectly harmless, blue-gray or blue green coating on grapes and plums.

TRANSITION

The Gospel isn't complicated

HEAVEN IS IN OUR HEARTS

Explanation: When you become a believer, you become connected by God's Spirit to heaven itself. The Holy Spirit lives within you, and there is an open communication channel between the Spirit, the Father, and son (Romans 8:26). Jesus prays for his children (Hebrews 7:25 & Romans 8:34).

Real Life Illustration - King David's son Absalom was a charmer, and to say the least, David had not been a good father to him, so Absalom rebelled against his dad, intending to take the throne. The military sided with the son, and a few of David's prized advisors switched over too. David fled the palace, exited Jerusalem with a small band of men, his wives, and children. Absalom comes after his dad with the full army, intending to assassinate him. Psalm 3 was written in the middle of this assault; This is a real life example, and I want you to see what happens.

1. Believers still sin – we still fall short. Any sin that can be committed, we can still do too. In this instance, not only has David violated the boundaries of his marriage, but he has been a weak and dysfunctional father;
2. Believers still suffer – We live in a fallen world, and Jesus taught us that "it rains on the just and the unjust."
 - a. Notice that David says "how many are my foes?" "How many rise up against me? Have you ever felt that the problems just keep on coming? If it isn't one thing, it is another;
 - b. In David's case, he is looking at Absalom's rebellion, joined by the army, and by his counselors. The weight of it is so heavy, he can't lift up his head;
3. Believers are still human – Verse 2 – "Many are saying God will not deliver him."

- a. Of course, this is a knock against the Lord by unbelievers. David's God doesn't care. He isn't paying attention, etc.
- b. But this is also a way of saying, "David isn't worth saving." David believes it himself, because he bows his head in guilt and shame.

4. God stays close

- a. Jesus said he would never forsake us – Joshua 1:9 – Be strong and of good courage - the Lord is with you wherever you go; Matthew 28 – all authority has been given to Jesus, and he will be with us to the end of the world; Psalm 130 – out of the depths I call to thee, Lord here my voice – and God was there. Psalms 139 – Whether I go to the heights or the depths, there God is with me.

5. Believers live grace-centered, not guilt-ridden lives – Didn't David deserve what he was getting? "What goes around comes around, right Yet, did you notice, that God lifted his head? Grace is unmerited favor. – There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

6. Believers have immediate and intimate access to God. David prayed, and God answered. Do you notice, he didn't pray according to a formula? What did he do? He cried aloud.

- a. Hebrews 4:16 says "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
- b. The Prophet Micah said "But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.
- c. Luke 21:28 says "Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

7. Believers have peace despite the circumstances around us. David still had 10,000 enemies surrounding him, yet he went to sleep. We don't know what God said to David. We know God's answer sometimes is no, but David went to sleep. Being in God's presence was enough. I suspect that David was filled with the fruit of the Spirit here.

8. Believers stand for justice and against oppression – David asks God to break the teeth of his enemies. This sounds like an angry prayer, but it isn't. David was using a hunting metaphor – to defang the enemies, so that they couldn't harm anyone and that the kingdom could rightfully be restored;

- a. I heard about a man this week who has developed an important product. He makes \$65,000 per speech, so he is in high demand and quite successful. When he was at a restaurant at some point, he felt the waiter was too slow, so he berated him by asking the young man if he was aware how much his time was worth? I'm glad I wasn't in the room when that happened. The heart filled with heaven takes a stand against oppression anywhere one sees it happening.
- b. Yet, we also give grace wherever we can. If we have strength, and someone else is weak, we can provide a blessing. This week, a lady named Linda passed away. Ms. Linda was a dear friend of mine. At one point her whole family attended regularly, but they eventually moved on. Though often ill, Ms. Linda came and sat in the back as often as she could. When she passed away the family called, and I went to be around Ms. Linda in the hospital room before the funeral home had made it there to take her away. We prayed together, and they told me that they were having the funeral somewhere else than in our church. This is a family that has integrity, and they knew that they had not been attending here in recent months, and they didn't want to impose or to presume. I immediately offered the church, because I knew Grace Street would want to extend that kind of love to them. A couple of the family members had tears streaming down their cheeks as a result of your gift.

- c. So, we stand up when the weak or oppressed, and the heart with heaven inside of it also gives grace and offers strength wherever possible.
9. Believers share His love with the world – verse 8 – A testimony – from the Lord comes deliverance. He shared what he knew, and he prayed for blessings upon the world, blessings which only come through Jesus Christ.

HEAVEN IS HOME

1. Will heaven disappoint us?
 - a. *Have you ever been disappointed?* I remember a Christmas as a child, when my brother and I were still in our pre-teen years. He had asked for a car, and I had asked for something equally big. We made it through the Christmas morning without either of the gifts we had requested. My parents said, “Wait, we have one more thing for you in the garage? My brother and I rushed to the small, one car garage at 1420 Marshalldale drive, slammed open the garage door, leapt down the two concrete steps to find rabbits. My parents had given us rabbits. Turned out to be a great gift eventually, but in the moment, we were disappointed.
 - b. *Will heaven disappoint you?* In one of his *Far Side* cartoons, Gary Larson depicts a winged man seated in heaven on a cloud. No one near. Nothing to do. Marooned on his celestial post. The caption expresses his disappointment – “Wish I had brought a magazine.” Here are some things I want you to see about heaven.
2. Heaven is a place. John 14: 1-3. Jesus said, “I am going to prepare a place for you. Heaven will be tangible and touchable, just like the pews beneath you and the person next to you.
3. Heaven’s Gates are Open – (Revelation 22:25)
 - a. Why? Not to let in the Light – because God and the Lamb are the light.
 - b. Why? Because there is no more sin or crying or pain. All suffering is gone. Even ours.
 - c. Why? Because the enemies of God are gone;
 - d. Why? Because the people of God have a purpose – to love him and to serve him freely and fully.
 - e. Why? Because all the sin in us will be gone. We have glimpses of our renewed selves on our best days, don’t we? We do something really good for the right reason, and we feel inside of us God’s blessing. And no one else will be there to affect the mood, or to spoil the scene.
 - f. Why? All strife will be gone. The Bible says in Isaiah (11:6) that the wolf will lie down with the lamb. Max Lucado imagines heaven’s dramatic reunions:
 - i. A soldier embracing the sharpshooter who killed him;
 - ii. A daughter seeing her abusive but repentant father and holding him;
 - iii. A son encountering the mother who aborted him?
 - iv. When they do, forgiveness will fall like the Niagra.¹
4. Heaven is a person.
 - a. We will be with our redeemer;
 - b. Romans 11:33 says “Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out.

¹ Max Lucado, 3:16. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Press, 2007), 109.

- i. Endless attributes of God await – and wonder after wonder. His grace. His wisdom. His love. Paul says that God has glorious riches and a love that is wide and long and high and deep.
 - ii. He can do more than we can ask or imagine.
5. Illustration: John Todd was very young when the deaths of his parents left him orphaned. He was one of several children, and, as was common in the early 1800s, he and all his siblings were farmed out to relatives. An aunt offered to take little John.

She sent a servant by the name of Caesar to bring John to her. The boy climbed on the back of the horse, wrapped his small arms around the man and set out for her house. His questions unveiled his fears.

- i. Will she be there?” Oh, yes,” Caesar assured. “She’ll be there waiting up for you.”
- ii. Will I like living with her? My son, you fall into good hands.
- iii. Will she love me? The servant was patient and soft in his reply. “As, she has a big heart.”
- iv. Do you think she’ll go to bed before we get there?” Oh, no! She’ll be sure to wait up for you. You’ll see when we get out of these woods. You’ll see her candle in the window.

Sure enough, as they neared the house, John saw a candle in the window and his aunt standing in the doorway. As he shyly approached the porch, she reached down and kissed him and said, “Welcome home!”

Young John Todd grew up in his aunt’s care. She was a mother to him. When the time came for him to select a profession, he followed a calling into the pastorate. Years later, the role with his aunt was reversed. She sent news of her failing health and impending death. Here is what he wrote in reply:

My Dear Aunt,

Years ago, I left a house of death, not knowing where I was to go, whether anyone cared, whether it was the end of me. The ride was long, but the servant encouraged me. Finally I arrived to your embrace and a new home. I was expected; I felt safe. You did it all for me.

Not it’s your turn to go. I’m writing to let you know, someone is waiting up, your room is all ready, the light is on, the door is open, and you’re expected.²

CONCLUSION

INVITATION

² Ibid., 111-12.