

Pastor's Note

Hello

First order questions about life have an affect our everyday lives. Origins, calling, and destination. Most of us feel like our eternal destiny, is a long way off. We figure eternity will take care of itself. But we're looking at the way we think about our destiny. And how it dramatically affects what happens in our lives today; how it affects now and not just how it's going to affect then. We're looking at things that Jesus had to say about your final destination. Jesus said a lot about heaven and what it was going to be like.

A. You were created to live forever.

That's the way God made human beings. He made us to live forever. John 3:16 (NIV) *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* He made us to last. Forever life. So you start thinking of your life in a different way when you realize that. It's not just now. God has a plan for your life that goes all the way into eternity. In this life that God has given you, he gives you the choice to have a different kind of life, eternally.

B. Heaven is more real than now.

Now feels real. We can touch it. Heaven is out there. We've never seen it. So it doesn't feel real yet. But just because you can't feel it now doesn't mean it's not real. God says he's going to transform your body into a body that never dies, into a glorified, perfect body for all eternity. Think about that. You're going to be able to do everything your heart wants to do. That's the glorified body that Jesus talks about. And God's going to recreate and glorify creation just like he's going to glorify your body. That's the picture to have in your mind when you think about heaven. A perfect paradise, a perfect body, and a perfect soul for all eternity. Heaven is not going to be less. It's going to be more.

C. God wants you to be in heaven.

He wants you to be with him in heaven with Him. In, John 14:1-4 (NLT) *Jesus said, "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going."* Jesus is giving you assurance that he wants you to be there. He wants you to be with him. He doesn't want you to be left out. He wants you in. He's saying I want you to be with me and I've made the way for you to be with me and I want to show you the way for you to be with me. He's absolutely showing you the way. That's what Jesus teaches us about heaven.

D. God wants to reward you in heaven.

In Matthew 6:20 (NLT) Jesus taught, *"Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal."* We think of rewards just as something attached to victories we have on this earth. But Jesus says, no, I'm going to reward you also for things you gave up because you had character, because you had integrity. In Luke 16:9 (NLT) he says, *"Here's the lesson: Use your worldly resources to benefit others and to make friends. Then when your earthly possessions are gone they will welcome you into an eternal home."* One of the greatest treasures is people who will greet you in eternity, who will be with you there because you invested in their lives. You've used your life to love people. You've used it to serve people. Jesus says you're going to be rewarded for that for all of eternity. The rewards of heaven are an

anchor to get you through the rough storms of life and if you choose Jesus Christ now you will be rewarded in paradise.

So what do you do about it now? What do you do about this question of eternity right now, today, in this moment? Two things. There are two things you can do today.

1. Establish your final destination.

If it's not settled in your heart, if it's not settled in your mind, settle it right now. Some people think it can't be settled until after we died. Some people think we have to try to do the best we can and when we get to heaven, God will settle up the books to see if we make it in by the skin of our teeth or miss getting in by that much. Too bad. That kind of a thing. Settling this question is the most important thing you will do in your life. There are a lot of important decisions in life; decisions about dating, cars, jobs, college, marriage, kids, retirement and on and on. But all of them pale in comparison to the importance of this question. Do you have eternal life?

There are people who walk confidently through life, knowing the answer this question. Have you experienced that kind of confidence? Are you a follower of Jesus Christ? Do you believe in heaven? Do you believe in eternity? Do you even believe in God? Do you have eternal life?

Begin to grapple with these questions in your mind. Don't avoid them because they're uncomfortable. Wrestle with them. Listen to people and talk to people. Really find out about what you can know. You may not even be aware that you can settle it today; that you have eternal life. Because it's not based on anything that you've done or are doing or are going to do. If it was based on what you do, you couldn't settle it today. But it's not based on that. It's based on what Jesus Christ already did for you. That he died for you on the cross. That he was resurrected. That he offers you the gift of eternal life in paradise.

So you can stop trying to earn what can only be given. Love cannot be earned. Love can only be given. And Jesus gives you his love and says, here take it. It's a gift I'm offering to you. When it comes to settling our destiny and accepting that gift it seems like it would be an easy choice, but there's something in the way. There's something for all of us that gets in the way. Jesus said in, John 11:25 (NLT) "*...I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying.*" That's the assurance he gives us of the kind of life that only he can give. But there's something that gets in the way of that sometimes. He talked about that in John 12:25 (NIV) when he said, "*Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*"

Are we supposed to hate our life? I thought the Bible said we were supposed to enjoy all things that are given by God. The key word in that verse is the word "their." It happens twice. Loves their life. Hates their life. He's talking about the selfish life. Anyone who loves their prideful, selfish life, I've got to do it my way; I've got to make it work out myself. Anyone who does that, Jesus says you're going to lose, because you're depending on yourself and not him, who is the only one who can give you the gift of life. But anyone who hates that and who is humble enough to say I'm willing to receive a gift from somebody else's life, that's the one who's going to find eternal life, he says.

Several years ago there was this scandal with some of these fantasy sports websites. These were big websites. Sort of an insider trading scandal, where some of the guys from one site got inside information and they used it to play on the other sites and made hundreds of thousands of dollars. Insider trading with fantasy sports leagues. What's the world coming to? Jesus is an insider trader but in the best of ways. Nothing illegal here. He gives you the inside, the total inside information for making the biggest bet of your life. Make no mistake about it, answering this question, do you have eternal life?, is the absolute most important issue you will settle during your time on

this earth. And he says you bet on yourself, your life, your pride, and your good works; you're going to lose a hundred percent of the time when it comes to eternal life. It might do you some good in this world. It might not. It depends on who you are. But when it comes to eternal life, you're going to lose a hundred percent of the time. But he said you bet on me, you bet on the life that I'm going to give you; you're going to win a hundred percent of the time. It's not a difficult decision. Jesus says I have the inside scoop and I want you to settle your final destination. Once you've settled it, it's settled. It's done. I know even for a lot of followers of Christ, people who've been believers for a long time, they're not quite sure it's settled yet. There's this feeling, we have this picture in our minds that we get to heaven and we're in this long, long line heading up to this gate where Peter's either going to let us in or not let us in. And we're standing there thinking, I'm a Christian. I went to Macedonia Christian Church. I remember. But the longer you stay in that line the more you start to sweat. Did I really say the prayer right? There's this one thing I did wrong. Can God forgive even that? You're sweating more and more as you get closer and closer to see whether you're going to get in.

That is not what's going to happen. Jesus taught us that is not what's going to happen once you've settled this issue. Look at what he taught in John 5:24 (NLT) *"I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life."* What Jesus is saying here is you're not in that line. Once you've asked him into your life you go straight into heaven. You get a fast pass into heaven. Not in that line, no long line, no worrying. It is absolutely settled. That's not based on my word. That's not based on your hope. That's based on the promise of Jesus Christ, the only one who can settle it. So the first thing you do when it comes to eternity is you settle it. The second thing you do is you...

2. Focus your mind on your destination.

First you settle your final destination and then you set your mind on your final destination. You let it start to fill your thoughts in the way it transforms the way that you live. It betters, it strengthens the way that you live. Colossians 3:1-2 (NIV) *"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."* Look at this phrase; set your mind on things above. Perhaps you've heard about people being so heavenly minded they're no earthly good. Or people who always have their head in the clouds. The truth is you can use thoughts of heaven as a way to escape the realities of this earth, escape your responsibilities on this earth. That's not what this verse is talking about.

Instead it's talking about a different way of thinking that causes you to live the best life possible on this earth. Thinking that causes you to have a kind of faith and courage and strength that you've never had because now you know where you're headed. And in that confidence you can live a different kind of life. You know the way. Here's what setting your heart and mind on heaven does. When you set your heart and mind on heaven it increases the faith you need right now. The decision seems risky. You might be afraid to take it, and all of a sudden you find the courage to face the risk and you realize the truth. Decide and you'll live forever. What are you waiting for? I took the risk and I know. I'm living forever. Why shouldn't you take that risk of faith? Take it!

That love that you were afraid to reach out for in your life... all of a sudden you find the power to reach out for that love because you realize Jesus in heaven wants you with him forever. When you've got someone who loves you as much as God does, you can take a risk. He's your safe bet. So what I'm inviting you to do is be gloriously, heavenly minded. Love God with all your heart,

mind, soul and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. Fix your thoughts on this eternity that God's talking about. Find the wonderful freedom of looking away from what you're gaining and what you're losing on this earth as a way to keep score. And instead look into the rewards of heaven that we're going to enjoy for all eternity. Look there instead. And recognize that the hurts, the losses, and the pains on this earth; all of them are going to be more than made up for in heaven. That's the reality of heaven.

If you have a love that's been squashed on this earth God's going to more than fulfill that love in heaven. If you've got a dream that maybe just now you're starting to realize that dream is never going to be fulfilled on this earth, God's going to take that dream. It doesn't die when you die. You take it on with you to heaven the good dreams, the godly dreams. And God will more than realize that dream in heaven. If you've got a hurt that's never been healed on this earth, that hurt will be healed in heaven. If you have a need in your life that's just not being met and you feel like that need is never going to be met in your life, that need will be gloriously, wonderfully, more than met, and multiplied in heaven.

The Bible says in the book of Revelation 7:16-17 (NIV) *"Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."* That is what we're looking forward to. That Lamb at the center of the throne, that's Jesus. He's the Lamb, the one who made the sacrifice for us. He's at the center of the throne. He's the one who's in control and he's making the decisions. That Lamb at the center of the throne is Jesus. And Jesus is looking forward to you being with him. Jesus is looking forward to rewarding you for all of eternity.

So as we close I want to take just a brief moment to pray. If you need to settle your final destination, you've never settled it, I want to give you opportunity to do that now. For all of us I want to give us the chance to set our minds, set our hearts on this eternity that we've been talking about. Would you pray with me?

Blessings,

Scott

