

Heaven is for Real

Why 2 days before a national election would I preach about heaven? Maybe because our church has had 20 deaths this year. Maybe because the US has had 234,085 deaths related to Covid-19. Maybe because I spoke with someone yesterday who is very soon making her way there.

The question is, "Do you believe heaven is real? Famous physicist, Albert Einstein, once said this about heaven, "An individual who should survive his physical death is beyond my comprehension, nor do I wish it otherwise; such notions are for the fears of feeble souls."

Wow, heaven is beyond Albert Einstein's comprehension. Imagine that! If heaven is not beyond my comprehension, does that make me smarter than Albert Einstein? I kind of like the sound of that! At any rate, I've got news for our friend Albert, and other naysayers, heaven is real.

Nels Ellertson, a longtime member of ULC, believed heaven is real. He called to tell me he had a vision of it. He was 100 years old at the time. In the vision, there was beautiful green grass everywhere. He was walking up a grassy hill, and when he finally got to the top, he saw people.

Nels said there were countless people in every direction, and they were eating. At the tables closest to him were all his relatives. He went right over to speak with them, and they all said to him, "Welcome to heaven, Nels. What took you so long? We've all been waiting for you."

This vision was very real for Nels. At 100, heaven was very real for him. After he told me about his vision, he then told

me he was more than ready to go to there, to go to heaven, and to eat and live in that grassy place with all his relatives, and of course, with his Lord and Savior as well.

Our first reading from Revelation 7 gives us another vision of heaven. This vision is from one of Jesus' disciple John, who like Nels was an older man. He was in prison at this time for his faith in Jesus, living on an island called Patmos, which is just off the coast of modern-day Turkey.

Heaven was very real for John, too, and he tells us here, 3 significant things God has shown him about it. In fact, like Nels, John sees countless people there. He says, "There was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages."

So, the first thing John says about heaven, is that it is big and inclusive. Like the stars in the sky, like the sand in the sea, the number of people in heaven are uncountable. There are too many to count. That's because this multitude is not from a few nations, but from every nation.

Indeed, heaven is so big and inclusive that we see people of every nation, every race, and every language there. This means, unlike our world today, where nations and races often don't get along, heaven is a reality where people come together around the Lord's throne to worship him.

The second thing John says about heaven is the people there are saved from a great ordeal. In other words, these people have come through times of great struggle and hardship in life. They have suffered greatly, and now they have been saved by the blood of the Lamb.

When John speaks about these people washing their robes in the blood of the lamb, he means they have had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They have had faith in Jesus, who has loved them so much that he died for them on the cross, so they might be saved in every possible way.

So, these are people the Lord Jesus has forgiven. These are people the Lord Jesus has led through the struggles and hardships in life. These are people who after they had died, the Lord Jesus lifted from death, and are now living a new and eternal life with God in heaven.

The third thing John says about heaven is the Lord will care for these people. As they gather around God's throne in heaven. As they worship the Lord and bask in all the joys of eternal life with Christ, John says that God will shelter, care for, and protect these people there.

In this way, heaven is beyond the reach of the struggles and hardships of this world. God will shelter people from such trouble there. So, in heaven, no harm will come to people, all good things will be provided for them, and God will gently comfort people by wiping every tear from their eyes.

So, the purpose of heaven seems to be threefold: First, to bring many people near to God's holy, loving and comforting presence. Second, to save people and give the refuge from the troubles of their lives. Third, to provide for peoples' needs in ways we in this world can only imagine.

Perhaps John's vision of heaven seems like something you want to be part of. Well, I've got good news for you. God means for you to be part of it. The Lord has called you to be one of the vast multitude of people no one could count, this multitude from every nation, race, and language.

In fact, in the reading itself, the question is asked, "Who are these robed in white, and where have they come from?" The answer comes back, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb."

The great ordeal is of course the struggles and hardships of your life. They are the presence of sin and evil you face, the illnesses and addictions you face, the family and personal struggles you face, the hardships you have had as you face the death of loved ones and face your own death.

You, like so many before you, are living this great ordeal, but guess what, you do not have to face it alone. You may wash yourself in the blood of the lamb. If language like that seems strange to you, all it means is you place your trust in the Lord Jesus, to help you through your life, and he will.

The person I told you about earlier, who's facing death right now said this, "The Lord's carried me through everything in my life, and he's carrying me through this, too, all the way to heaven." Maybe Albert Einstein, could not comprehend heaven, but she has, and she is planning to go there.

You may plan to go there too. I'm not saying today, but today is the right time to ask the Lord for the first time, or to remind the Lord for the 100th time, "God, I believe in you; Lord, I trust in you; and with all my heart, I want to be close to you, today, my whole life, and one day, in heaven."

Then, enjoy John's and Nels' visions of heaven. Because heaven is real, and the Lord will one day take you and countless others there, out of this great ordeal called life, to gather you around his throne, to shelter you from harm, to comfort you, provide for you, and love you – forever.