

Longing For Heaven, Living on Earth

Longing for the King – Crossroads Advent 2009

January 3, 2009 – Mark Bickel

- **Video Song**: Joy to the World (Actually more about Second Advent than 1st!)

- **Advent Wreath: Light All Candles** – The Coming of the Wise Men
 - o **Epiphany Notes** (12 days of Christmas, Orthodox Christmas, start “Normal Time”)
 - o **Passage**: Matt 2:1-12
 - o **Coming to a King!**

- **Longing for Heaven, Living on Earth**
 - o **C.S. Lewis**
 - “If I discover within myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world”
 - “You don't have a soul. You are a Soul. You have a body.”
 - o **Romans 8:18-25** – Groaning for Heaven
 - ¹⁸I consider that our **present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.** ¹⁹The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that^[l] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

²²We know that **the whole creation has been groaning** as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³Not only so, but **we ourselves**, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, **groan inwardly** as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently
 - **Present sufferings** nothing ... compared to glory to come! Revealed in us!

- **Discussion:** What would it look like to “groan inwardly”?
 - **All creations groans ... we groan ... Do you groan?**
 - Not complacent, not satisfied, not grumbling .. but Groaning!
- **Romans 8:26-27** – Groaning for Us
- ²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the **Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.** ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.
 - Spirit groans, intercedes for you and me!
- **John 14:1-3** – Preparing a Place
- ¹**Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God;** trust also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and **prepare a place for you,** I will come back and **take you to be with me** that you also may be where I am.
 - In this life we can take heart, not be troubled - we can trust God who always fulfills his promises – He is preparing a place for us to be with him!
- **Hymn of Heaven** (Words by Bernard of Cluny ; Music by Sarah Burdick)
- Brief life is here our portion, Brief sorrow short lived care:
The life that knows no ending, The tearless life is there.
Oh happy retribution: Short toil, eternal rest,
For mortals and for sinners, A mansion with the blest.
- And now we fight the battle But then shall wear the crown
Of full and everlasting And passionless renown.
And now we watch and struggle, And now we live in hope,
And Zion in her anguish With Babylon must cope.
- But he whom now we trust in Shall then be seen and known
And they that know and see him Shall have him for their own.
The morning shall awaken, The shadows shall decay
And each true-hearted servant Shall shine as doth the day.

There God our king and portion, In fullness of his grace,
Shall we behold forever And worship face to face.

Jesus in thy mercy Bring us To that dear land of rest,
Who art with God the Father And Spirit ever blest.

○ Hebrews 11 – Longing for Heaven while Living on Earth

- we started and will end here – people living as aliens here, longing for a better country
- ¹³All these people were still **living by faith** when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they **admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.** ¹⁴People who say such things show that they are **looking for a country of their own.** ¹⁵If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶Instead, they **were longing for a better country—a heavenly one.** Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.
- As we come to the end of Advent and Christmas, let's set our eyes and hearts and longing on that better country as well!
- If you want to go back – if you want to seek hope, love, joy, peace here on earth – you can, God will let you – but Jesus said it is he who gives up his life who will find it, and with it find eternal life – Where are you looking to settle down, where are you seeking life – here or in heaven?
- God is preparing a city and he will not be ashamed to let you call him God on that last day if you seek first His kingdom and His righteousness

○ I Corinthians 13:12 – We see in a mirror dimly

- ¹²Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

○ **C.S. Lewis: The Last Battle** (pages 212-213, 228)

- C.S. Lewis attempts to give us a small glimpse into heaven in “The Last Battle”, here Aslan, the Lion, who is the Christ figure, is welcoming some of the main characters into this heavenly kingdom, this “new Narnia” unlike anything they ever experienced before

- “Listen, Peter, When Aslan said you could never go back to Narnia, he meant the Narnia you were thinking of. But that was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia: just as our own world, England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan’s real world. You need not mourn over Narnia, Lucy. All of the old Narnia that mattered, all the dear creatures, have been drawn into the real Narnia through the Door. And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream “
- “It is as hard to explain how this sunlit land was different from the old Narnia as it was to tell you how the fruits of that country taste. Perhaps you will get some idea of it if you think like this. You may have been in a room in which there was a window that looked out on a lovely bay of the sea or a green valley that wound away among the mountains. And in the wall of that room opposite to the window there may have been a looking-glass. And as you turned away from the window you suddenly caught sight of that sea or that valley , all over again, in the looking-glass. And the sea in the mirror, or the valley in the mirror, were in one sense just the same as the real one: yet at the same time they were somehow different – deeper, more wonderful, more like places in a story: a story you have never heard but very much want to know. The difference between the old Narnia and the new Narnia was like that. The new one was a deeper country: every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more. I can’t describe it any better than that: if you ever get there you will know what I mean.”
- The unicorn summed it up best as he stamped his right fore hoof on the ground and neighed and then cried: "I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes look a little like this. Bree-hee-hee! Come further up, come further in!" He shook his main and sprang forward into a great gallop ... As they beheld each new, marvelous sight, the unicorn kept urging them on “come further up, come further in”
- Aslan turned to them and said: “you do not yet look so happy as I mean you to be” Lucy said, “We’re so afraid of being sent away Aslan. And you have sent us back into our own world so often.” “No fear of that,” said Aslan. “Have you not guessed?” Their hearts leaped and a wild hope rose within them.
- “There was a real railway accident,” said Aslan softly. “Your father and mother and all of you are – as you used to call it in the Shadow-Lands – dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning.”
- And as he spoke he no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say

they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has ever read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”

- **Pray**

- In order to set our hearts on heaven and long for it as we should **God gives us glimpses of heaven throughout the Scriptures**. Tonight we want to get a small glimpse into eternity in song and through Scripture. So as people read from **Revelation**, and as we sing **songs of heaven**, let God open your eyes to see at least a brief glimpse of Eternity tonight – and let that lead you on to love God, to attempt great things for Christ and His kingdom, and to groan with the Spirit for that glorious day when we shall see Him face to face!

- **Worship and Scripture Reading**

- **Reading 1: II Corinthians 4:13-18**

- It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.
- Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

- **Worship Set A:**

- He Is Exalted
- I Will Rise

○ **Reading 2: Revelation 5:1-14**

- Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” And no one was found in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”
- And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain ... Then they sang a new song, saying
- “Worthy are you to take the scroll and open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom of priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth.”
- Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wisdom and might and glory and blessing! And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshipped.

○ **Worship Set B:**

- In Christ Alone
- Before the Throne of God Above
- Facedown

○ **Reading 3: Revelation 11:15-19**

- Later the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying
- “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and the saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”
- Then God’s temple in heaven was opened and the ark of his covenant was seen within the temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

○ **Reading 4: Revelation 15:2-4**

- And there was what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire – and also those who conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And they sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb saying:
- Great and amazing are your deeds, oh Lord God almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

○ **Reading 5: Revelation 19:1-5**

- After this I heard what seems to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”
- Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”
- And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying “Amen. Hallelujah!” And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.”

○ **Worship Set C:**

- All Hail the Power of Jesus Name
- Crown Him With Many Crowns
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○ **Reading 6: Revelation 19-22 (excerpts)**

- Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called faithful and true, and in righteousness he judges and makes war ... On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords...
- And I saw a great white throne, and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done....
- Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying “Behold the dwelling of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

○ **Reading 7: Revelation 19-22 (excerpts)**

- And he who was seated on the throne said “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But for the coward, the faithless, the detestable, as for murders, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”..

- Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations...
 - And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the almighty and the Lamb. The city has no need for sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day – and there will be no night there....
 - Hallelujah, Praise the Lord, the King of kings and the Lord of lords
- **Worship Set D:**
 - Better is One Day
 - Revelation Song
- **Closing: Revelation 22:20-21**
 - He who testifies to these things says “Surely, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.