***HEAVEN***

***An introduction:***

“The man who is about to sail for Australia or New Zealand as a settler, is naturally anxious to know something about his future home, its climate, its employments, its inhabitants, its ways, its customs. All of these are subjects of deep interest to him. You are leaving the land of your nativity, you are going to spend the rest of your life in a new hemisphere. It would be strange indeed if you did not desire information about your new abode. Now surely, if we hope to dwell forever in that “better country, even a heavenly one,” we ought to seek all the knowledge we can get about it. Before we go to our eternal home we should try to become acquainted with it.” (Quote from J.C. Ryle – Heaven – Alcorn p. 6).

Think of a time when you were planning to move to another site or state, OR when you were planning a major vacation. In either case you had not been there before.

* What were some ways you went about finding as much as you could about the site that you were going to move to or vacation?
* When you got there what were some positive surprises?
* What were some disappointments about the place after you got there?
* What are some comparisons and contrasts between a new earthly site and heaven?
* What benefit do you see in finding out all you can about heaven even now?

There is not much study of heaven because many people believe Scripture does not deal with that issue. According to Bible scholars, your heavenly Father has arranged that no less than one-sixth of His New Testament is filled with references to the joy of heaven and the reappearance of Christ. (Good News – Heaven p. 3)

**Colossians 3:1-2 ESV:** *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.****2****Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*

The Greek word translated “set your hearts on” is zeteo, which denotes man’s general philosophical search or quest. The same word is used in the Gospels to describe how “the Son of Man came to seek…what was lost” (Luke 19:10. It’s also used for how a shepherd looks for his lost sheep (Matthew 18:12), a woman searches for a lost coin (Luke 15:8), and a merchant searches for a fine pearl (Matthew 13:45). It is the diligent, active, single-minded investigation. So we can understand Paul’s admonition in Colossians 3:1 as follows: “Diligently, actively, single-mindedly pursue the things above” – in a word, Heaven. (Heaven – Alcorn pp. 20-21)

The verb zeteo is in the present tense, suggesting an ongoing process as well as an imperative command. “Keep seeking heaven.” Don’t just have a conversation, read a book, or listen to sermon and feel as if you’ve fulfilled the command. Since you’ll spend the next lifetime living in Heaven, why not spend this this lifetime seeking Heaven, so you can eagerly anticipate and prepare for it? C.S Lewis observed, “If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 21)

**Matthew 6:33 ESV:** *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

The same form of zeteo is also used in this verse. What might this mean in practical terms today, this invitation to “first seek indeed the reign [of God] and his righteousness?” It means to go to the places where Jesus is reigning with his gracious presence, to receive his gifts of forgiveness and righteousness, to learn his truth, and to respond to his call. Jesus’ invitation is holistic. To seek the reign of God is to seek the Gospel, which comes to us in the Scriptures and the Sacraments. In seeking that Gospel, we will also experience the sustaining community of fellow disciples, who are our brothers and sisters. With them we are joined to Christ in Holy Baptism, and with them we gather to hear God’s Word and receive our Lord’s Supper. In those places God’s saving righteousness is found; there God is at work forgiving and making things right. That is what life is for; here is the purpose and goal of the body. Jesus is drawing, wooing, and inviting his disciples thus to orient their lives and so to be free from worry over life’s other needs. The Father will supply those needs as well (6:33b). (CC)

Introductory DVD –“The End of Life” – Lutheran Hour Ministries (God Connects)

Comments or questions?

1. ***What Happens When Believers Die?*** 
   1. A human is made up of body and soul (Mt 10:28; cf 2Pt 1:13–15). When a human dies, his soul is separated from his body. His body decays, but his soul—and thus he himself, his *ego*, or personality—lives on. If a person trusts in Jesus for salvation, his soul will live in joy with God, awaiting the resurrection, the last judgment, and eternal life. If a person is wicked and unbelieving, his soul will live in torment, awaiting the resurrection, the last judgment, and eternal condemnation. (TLSB)
   2. The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod in its Commission on Theology and Church Relations document “A Statement on Death, Resurrection and Immortality states: The Old Testament Scriptures contain many references to the continuation of life after death. For example, the patriarchs believed that after their death they would be "gathered to their fathers in peace." This expression did not imply interment in a family grave, for it is used of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, even though they were buried far from the land of their fathers (Gen. 25:8-10; 35:29; 49:33; Num. 27: 13; Deut. 32: 50). The expression "he was gathered to his people" or "he slept with his people" shows the intense hope of the Israelite to be united with his ancestors, even in death. Our Lord summarized the Old Testament hope when He reminded the Sadducees that God was not the God of the dead but of the living. (Matt. 22: 32) Sheol, despite its often grim and shadowy character, was a place of continued existence in some form (Job 26: 5-6; Num. 16: 30; 1 Sam. 2: 6). Some passages describe sheol as a place of darkness (Job 10: 20-22); or a place to hide (Job 14: 13); or a place of hopelessness (Is. 28: 18) from which there is no return (Job 7: 9). Other passages contain a more positive affirmation about life after death and assure the pious Israelite that God will not abandon His saints in death but will abide with them, deliver them from sheol, and receive them to glory. (Ps. 16: 9-11 ; 49: 15; 73: 24)

Jesus knew that death could not annihilate Him but that He would arise and through His rising destroy the power of death (John 11: 25 ff.; 14: 6; Mark 9: 30-32; see Acts 2: 22-28; Rom. 1: 4; Eph. 1: 20). St. Paul cherished this same confidence (Phil. 1: 23; 2 Cor. 5: 8). Other passages describe the departed faithful as being with God. (Matt. 22: 29-32; Rev. 6: 9-11)

The New Testament speaks of the departed faithful as existing in a conscious and blessed state which at the very least can be described as the persistence of the individual's identity before God. The faithful are described as being in the presence of God and of enjoying peace and rest with Him. They are also described as sleeping (1 Thess. 4: 13 f.) or of being in the tombs (John 5: 28 f.; Matt. 27: 51-53). The inspired writers speak of death variously as the separation of body and soul (Gen. 35: 18) or as the departure of the spirit (Acts7 : 59; Luke23:46) or as the passing of the "I," the total person (Phil. 1: 23), "to be with Christ."

The New Testament also teaches the physical resurrection of the body in several passages (John 5: 28 f.; Rom. 8: 11; 1 Cor. 15: 51-54). Finally, the New Testament affirms that the physical bodies of the departed faithful will be glorified. (1 Cor. 15: 51-54; Phil. 3: 20-21)

* 1. In John 11:11–14, our Lord Jesus describes the death of His friend Lazarus as “sleep.” But note: the wicked who die have “no rest” (Is 57:20–21; Rev. 14:11). Death is a “rest” or “sleep” for the godly (Rev. 14:13, drawing from Ps 95). Thus, the Church calls the places where the godly are buried “cemeteries,” that is, “dormitories” or places of sleep, and the Church believes that the godly do indeed “rest in peace.” (TLSB)

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, in its Commission on Theology and Church Relations document “A Statement on Death, Resurrection, and Immortality states: (We) reject the teaching that the soul “sleeps” between death and the resurrection in such a way that it is not conscious of bliss. (Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – p. 71)

* 1. It is important to note that when Scripture speaks of death as a sleep, it is usually in the context of the resurrection. In those cases “sleep” is figurative expression indicating that physical death is not a permanent condition, since there will be a resurrection at the Last Day when those are in the grave will rise. (Confessing the Gospel: A Lutheran Approach to Systematic Theology – Volume 2 pp. 1147-1148)
     1. **Luke 23:43 ESV:** *And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.*

By prefacing his pronouncement with *“Truly … I say,”* Jesus alerts the hearer that what he is about to say has great significance. (CC p. 939)

* + - 1. The announcement that *“today”* paradise belongs to the penitent thief emphasizes the present reality of future end time blessings. This inheritance of paradise comes through the crucified flesh of Jesus. (CC p. 939)
      2. What is the lesson for us when we know someone who has gone his/her own way to this point in their lives?
    1. **Psalm 16:11 ESV:** *You make known to me the path of life;     in your presence there is fullness of joy;    at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*
       1. When talking about the word *“presence,*” the central point at issue was that the psalmist had firmly grasped God in faith and would not let go. In that sense he is in the presence of God. This is all God’s work. (Leupold)
       2. What would it mean to be “at home with the Lord” after death?
       3. What can we learn from the comment in letter “a”?
       4. In Israelite thought, the right hand was the favored one. As such, it symbolized the place of privilege or strength. The chief court official was seated at the king’s right hand as a symbol of his power and authority. The term can describe God’s chosen servant (e.g., King David). (TLSB p. 843)
    2. **2 Corinthians 5:8 ESV:** *Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*
       1. *“away from the body … at home with the Lord.”*† The situation of the Christian after death, when he is no longer living in his “earthly tent” (i.e., his body) but is in the immediate presence of the Lord. (CSB)
       2. If it is a blessed experience to be able to live now by faith, how much more blessed will it be to live forever then by sight. The apostle John expresses this thought in his First Epistle: “*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is”* This would be the same relationship as Adam and Eve had with God in the Garden, pre-fall. (**1 John 3:2)**. (PBC)
       3. Both 2 Corinthians 5:8 and Philippians 1:23 teach that when believers die, they do live with Christ fully, even before the resurrection of the body.
       4. What does that mean for you even now?
    3. **Philippians 1:23 ESV:** *I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.*
       1. Paul confesses what we know: to be with Christ in paradise is the absolute fulfillment of every good desire (cf Lk 23:43). (TLSB)
       2. Paul is yearning for the moment when he can bid farewell to this present life to be at home with Christ. (Stoeckhardt)
       3. In what is what Paul is speaking about “far better?”
    4. **Hebrews 13:5 ESV:** *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.*
       1. God categorically denies that He will ever forsake us. Guthrie says here: “The words appear to come from a mixture of sources (cf. Josh. 1:5; Deut. 31:6, 8) (Exegetical Notes – Buls)
       2. Bengel comments: “What was said to Jacob, to Joshua, the people, and to Solomon applies also to us…. He will neither withdraw his assistance nor his presence.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)
       3. Our course here on earth is filled with many potholes. How is Hebrews 13:5 of great comfort to you?
    5. **Psalm 23:4 ESV:** *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.* 
       1. Even in life’s most frightening situation, we can be confident of God’s guiding presence. Indeed, when God is with us, the valley of the shadow of death is one of the “paths of righteousness.” (TLSB)
       2. Here the emphasis lies on the fact that the Lord leads and guides His own on their way of life. He always leads them the right way. This way often leads through dark valleys, but the believer is always confident. He says in his confidence: “Even though I walk through a dark way, I am not afraid, I fear no evil. (Stoeckhardt)
       3. How do the passages in 5 and 6 above speak to our lives now on earth?
    6. **1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 ESV:** ***13****But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.****14****For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.*
       1. For the Christian, sleep is a particularly apt metaphor for death, since death’s finality and horror are removed by the assurance of resurrection.(CSB)
       2. Those who live without Jesus have no hope because they do not know of the resurrection. (TLSB)
    7. What are a few lessons we can take from the passages in “1-7”?
    8. What is your favorite passage in this section and why?
    9. Comments or questions?
  1. In one seminary class discussion took place concerning the role of the saints who have gone on before us. Some thought that our loved ones in heaven look down on us and see our daily activities. Another thought was that they are too busy enjoying the glory of heaven to be bothered with our daily lives.
  2. Holy Writ reveals but little of the state of the souls between death and resurrection. (Christian Dogmatics – F. Pieper – Volume 3 p. 511)
  3. Confessing the Gospel: A Lutheran Approach to Systematic Theology – Volume 2 states: “Indeed, the dead are unaware of what is happening among the living. (p. 1146). We simply do not know for certain but there are a few examples that are worth viewing.
     1. **Job 14:21 ESV:** *His sons come to honor, and he does not know it;  
            they are brought low, and he perceives it not.*
        1. In the pain of suffering or old age, we are not even aware of what is happening with our own children—whether they are being honored or brought down. When we die, of course, we are even less aware. (TLSB)
        2. Using the illustration of a person who died and was survived by his children, Job theorized: A dead person is ignorant of that which takes place on earth, and is not aware of the good or bad fortune of his children or others who are still alive. (PBC)
     2. **Isaiah 63:16 ESV:** *For you are our Father,    though Abraham does not know us,    and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O Lord, are our Father,    our Redeemer from of old is your name.*
        1. Isaiah is writing to comfort the people who will be in Babylonian captivity. He is trying to help the people see that their only hope is the Lord.
        2. Abraham and Israel were dead and resting securely in the heavenly home they both expected (Hebrews 11:13-16). Once believers die, they know the joys of heaven, but they do not know the affairs of the loved ones they leave behind. Both Abraham and Jacob (Israel) could not help the people of Isaiah’s day or any of the people of any age. God reveals the profound truth that the saints in glory do no influence the affairs of humans on earth. Only God does that. He alone is the Father of believers. God alone, in Christ, is our Redeemer. (PBC)
        3. How does God continue be a presence in this world, especially His believers?
     3. **Revelation 6:9-11 ESV: *9****When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.****10****They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”****11****Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brother should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.*
        1. Now the souls of God’s saints, as his priests (Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) in God’s heavenly temple, pray while God’s people on earth, who are also priests (1:6), are still in their suffering and are praying for deliverance (15:2–4). (CC p. 170)
        2. The fifth seal reveals the souls of the martyred saints under the altar. Judgment day had not yet arrived, but the souls of those who died for their faith were already in heaven. This coincides with what Jesus told the dying thief: “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). The souls of believers go to heaven the instant they pass out of this life. (PBC)
        3. John says he saw the souls of martyrs under “the altar.” He is not talking about a particular altar. The altar is a part of the symbolism of the sacrifice the martyrs made when they were put to death for what they believed. (PBC)
        4. Although in heaven, they know that the faithful would continue to suffer persecution and death until the Lamb administered final justice. (PBC)
        5. Christians are people who are persecuted by the devil and the world and who are willing to die for the faith; they may be called upon to die a martyr’s death, or they may die from other causes (e.g. illness or old age). (CC p. 158)

Christians are “martyrs” as they give witness in the lives by their faith, words and deeds. This includes all those who are martyrs up to the day of Christ’s return.

* + - 1. The martyrdom spoken of in Revelation 6 is best taken as referring to the martyrs of all ages. By the time this prophecy was written in the first century, relatively few Christians had been martyred in comparison with the carnage that was to come during regional and imperial persecutions. (TLSB)
      2. How is this text a comfort to us?
      3. Comments or questions?
    1. **Luke 16:19-31 ESV: *19****“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.****20****And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,****21****who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.****22****The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side, The rich man also died and was buried,****23****and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.****24****And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’****25****But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.****26****And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’****27****And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—****28****for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’****29****But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’****30****And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’****31****He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.”*
       1. Though some interpreters have regarded this story of Lazarus as a parable (perhaps because of dislike for v 23), the fact that Jesus used a personal name for a main character indicates a realistic situation. (TLSB)
       2. While the body sleeps, the soul is awake. For example, in Lk 16:19–31, the soul of the rich man in Hades prays (to no avail) that the beggar Lazarus would relieve his suffering or return to earth to warn his family. The soul of Lazarus, on the other hand, is “comforted” (v 25). Both the rich man and faithful Abraham are awake, conscious, and speaking. Scripture sometimes indicates that the departed souls are unaware of what takes place on earth (e.g., 2Ki 22:20; Jb 14:21; Is 57:1–2; 63:16). Yet it should not be concluded from this that they are unconscious. The soul of the rich man was not unconscious, nor was the soul of Abraham (Mt 22:32). (TLSB)
       3. What are lessons that we can learn from this reading?
       4. Comments or Questions?
  1. The phrase of the Proper Preface concerning “the angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven” speaks with greater clarity than any other phrase in the liturgy to the reality of heaven on earth, a reality we have called “inaugurated eschatology.” What we must always remember when we go to the Lord’s Supper is that we commune with Christ and that wherever Christ is, there is heaven. And this communion includes all the saints who have died and risen in Christ: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Ruth, Peter, Paul, our grandparents and great-grandparents – perhaps even our spouses or our children – and all the saints now living all over the world, and those still to come. After someone dies, it is good think of them at the Lord’s Supper, knowing that we come here below at the table of the Lamb and sin His songs, we do join them since they are simultaneously communing at the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom that knows no end, and singing the songs of the Lamb with angels and archangels. In Christ, in that great mystery of our union with Him, we are joined by all who are joined to Him. (Heaven on Earth: The Gifts of Christ in the Divine Service – Arthur A. Just Jr. pp. 212-213)
  2. While our baptized and believing deceased members of Christ’s Body are at rest in the presence of Jesus, we will finally see them again in Christ at the end of the pilgrimage: the new heavens and new earth that God is preparing. The Lord’s Supper is the foretaste of that great feast of God in rule and reign He will establish. By faith through the Word, we are united with all the saints when we assemble at His invitation at the Supper that He established as the foretaste of the feast to come. In anticipation of that great feast where we will see them again, we “see” them again when we gather to celebrate the Lord’s Supper as they join us in the great “holy, holy, holy” around the throne of the Lamb. So, I look forward each week to “meeting” again with my sainted (baptized and believing) grandparents, father, father-in-law, and countless saints of the ages, known and unknown to me, who join me around the table of the Lord. (Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoelke – pp. 124-125)
  3. The liturgy places us on a historical and eschatological line through God’s great, objective, cosmic act of justification in Jesus Christ. We now have the same status in the kingdom of God as both the prophets of old the saints in glory. We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, and, with Christians everywhere, we rejoice in their presence. They are standing with us and joining their voices with ours in the glorious liturgy. The song of heaven is “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come! (Revelation 4:8). (Heaven on Earth: The Gifts of Christ in the Divine Service – Arthur A. Just Jr. p. 20)
  4. What can we learn from “G through I” for our lives and receive comfort from it?
  5. Comments or questions?

1. ***What will happen on Judgment Day?***
   1. The NT reveals that Christ will return visibly. All nations will see Him, believers and unbelievers, including those who were responsible for His death. He will appear in the unveiled glory and majesty of God sitting at the right hand of the Father and coming on the clouds of heaven, accompanied by the holy angels. (Confessing the Gospel: A Lutheran Approach to Systematic Theology – Volume 2 p. 1152)
   2. On the Last Day Christ will appear and raise the dead, judge the world in righteousness. The place of judgment is not a definite spot or locality on earth, but it will be above the earth. Christ shall come in the clouds of heaven, and send His angels to gather all the nations before Him. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 305)
   3. Every single human being who ever lived or ever will live is going to be present. No excuses, No exceptions. It staggers the imagination. “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake” (Daniel 12:2). Just think what it would be like to be in the Arlington National Cemetery when Jesus comes back! (PBC)
      1. **Matthew 24:30-31 ESV: *30****Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.****31****And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*
         1. Matthew frequently portrays angels as assisting the Lord on Judgment Day (e.g., 13:39-41, 49; 16:27; 25:31). TLSB)
         2. Those who opposed the Messiah will mourn their actions, especially those who pierced Him (Rev 1:7). (TLSB)
      2. **Revelation 6:14-17 ESV: 14***The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.* **15***Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,.****16****And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:****17****For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*
         1. When this cosmic, earthquake-like shaking hits the earth as the mountains and islands begin to move and disappear, the peoples of the earth will be struck with a terror and a hopelessness that staggers the imagination and surpasses any horror yet experienced by humanity. (CC pp. 173-175)
         2. Calling upon the rocks and hills will be to no avail, for they cannot hide the people who thus cry out in fear from the anger and judgment of God and of his Christ. These cries of fear and anguish are misplaced and too late, for now is the time of reckoning and judgment. All peoples of the earth—king and subject, free and slave, rich and poor—all who did not heed the call to repentance and the invitation of the Gospel of the victorious Lamb will attempt to flee in terror. But there is no place to hide from the presence of the almighty God (cf. Gen 3:8–10). (CC pp. 173-175)
         3. Comments and Questions?
      3. **Matthew 25:31-46 ESV: *31****“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.****32****Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.****33****And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.****34****Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.****35****For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,****36****I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’****37****Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?****38****And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?****39****And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’****40****And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brother  you did it to me.’* ***41****“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.****42****For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,****43****I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’****44****Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’****45****Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’****46****And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*
         1. The separation will be done on the basis of the faith that was given to Christians and which they retain to the end. This separation is done before any deeds are mentioned.
         2. How is what is stated in “a” of a great comfort to all believers?
         3. Comments or questions?
      4. **John 5:24-5, 28-29 ESV: 24***Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.****25****“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.****28****Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice****29****and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.*
         1. “All passages about works can be judged according to this rule. When eternal life is granted to works, it is granted to those who have been justified. Only justified people are led by the Spirit of Christ, can do good works. (Ap. V 251-52). (TLSB)
         2. Without faith and Christ as Mediator, good works do not please, according to Hebrews 11:6: ‘Without faith it is impossible to please (God)’” (Ap. V 251-52). (TLSB)
      5. **1 Corinthians 15:51-52 ESV: *51****Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,****52****in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.*
         1. Some believers will not experience death and the grave. (CSB)
         2. All believers, whether alive when Jesus comes again or in the grave, will receive changed, imperishable bodies. (CSB)
         3. The transformation will take place in a flash (15:52). Paul uses colorful language to describe how instantaneously our bodies will be changed. The first phrase in 15:52, “in a moment,” literally denotes an instant of time that is indivisible. The second phrase in 15:52, “in the blinking of an eye,” or as most English translations have it, “in the twinkling of an eye,” denotes a movement of the eye that is so rapid it is almost undetectable. (CC p. 601)
         4. Consider your present body. How do you feel about has been said in this section?
         5. Comments or questions?
      6. **Job 19:25-27 ESV:** *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last I will stand upon the earth.* ***26****And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God,* ***27****whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!*
         1. Job expresses confidence that ultimately God will vindicate his faithful servants in the face of all false accusations. – It must have been his faith in his God and Savior that kept him from collapsing under the severe sufferings and trials. As Job looked ahead in faith to his Savior, he could, for the moment, forget his present troubles and in faith see what lay ahead for him after his life on earth had ended. (PBC)
         2. Job is certain that there will be a glorious resurrection of the body on the Last Day, that the very skin that clothed him during his mortal life will again cover the flesh that has become subject to decay and corruption. From this very same body, Job knows that he will see God. (TLSB)
   4. How will this time be scary?
   5. How will this time be comforting?
   6. Comments or questions?
2. ***Will the current Earth be Completely Destroyed and a Brand New Earth Created?***
   1. There are two views about will happen on the Last Day. The difference between these two views may be briefly stated thus: the one holds that the entire universe will be reduced by the fire to nothing, and a new heaven and a new earth will be created out of nothing; The second holds that the entire universe will be reduced by fire to its original substance, which God will then refashion into a new heaven and a new earth. That the world will be destroyed by fire is clearly taught in the Bible; but we may not charge a person with heresy who holds that this destruction will be either an annihilation or a renovation. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler pp. 310-311)
   2. Scripture stops short of stating that this world will be totally annihilated. Whether the destruction of this world will be total annihilation or renovation is debatable. It is certain, however, that the world as it now exits, bearing the marks of sin and “subjected to futility” and decay, will cease to exist (Roman 8:20). (Confessing the Gospel: A Lutheran Approach to Systematic Theology – Volume 2 p. 1161)
   3. The point is that this earth will not continue as it is but will altogether new and perfect.
      1. **2 Peter 3:7 ESV:** *But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*
         1. The word of God that brought the world into existence (v. 5) and that brought watery destruction on the wicked of Noah’s day will bring fiery destruction on the world that exists today and on its wicked people. (CSB)
         2. Fire is frequently used in the OT as a symbol of God’s punitive and destructive wrath, sometimes in connection with His final judgment (e.g., Zep 1:18; 3:8; Mal 4:1). (TLSB)
      2. **2 Peter 3:10-12 ESV: *10****But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.* ***11****Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,****12****waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!*
         1. The heavens will pass away with great force and speed. (TLSB)
         2. God will refine and purify them as the “new heavens and a new earth” (2 Peter 3:13). Luther: “This life amounts to eating, drinking, sleeping, digesting, begetting children, etc. Here everything goes by number: hours, days, and years in succession. Now when you want to look at the life to come, you must erase the course of this life from your mind. You dare not think that you can measure it as this life is measured. There everything will be one day, one hour, one moment: (AE 30:196). (TLSB)
      3. **Psalm 102:25-26 ESV:** *Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.****26****They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away,*
         1. With his first creation God clothed Himself with the manifestation of His glory. But He is more enduring than what He has made—and the first creation will give way to a new creation. (CSB)
         2. Speaking figuratively, as a garment gradually wears thinner and thinner with use and must be ultimately be discarded and replaced by another, so the visible heavens and earth will also in due time wear out. This is due to the effect of Adam’s fall and our continuing sin.(Leupold)
         3. In what ways is this happening today?
      4. **Luke 21:33 ESV:** *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*
         1. When the world passes away those who reject Jesus’ teaching will pass away with it. But those who hear and keep His Word will remain and inherit the kingdom He has prepared for them. (CC p, 805)
         2. Although everything may end (or appear to be over for us in our individual lives), one possession will endure forever. It is the Word of our God, the Word of life, the Word found in and through the Word, Jesus Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)
         3. What does this passage suggest for our daily living?
         4. Comments or questions?
      5. **Isaiah 65:17 ESV:** *For behold, I create new heavens   and a new earth,  
         and the former things shall not be remembered    or come into mind.*
         1. “I will bring it about and do it.” He is not speaking only of the spiritual heaven, but He makes all things new, spiritual and physical, although I do not see a new heaven and a new body in us, but only the one born of our parents. Yet we believe it. (Luther)
         2. This would seem to represent the totality of things, as expressed in Gen 1:1. The new heaven and earth will so fully show forth the glory of God their Creator, and so completely fulfill every need and desire of his creatures, that the former heavens and earth will no longer be remembered. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)
      6. **Romans 8:19-23 ESV: *19****For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.****20****For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope****21****that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.****22****For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.****23****And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*
         1. The above text is a powerful metaphor for creation’s yearning to be free from the change and death in its current state. (TLSB) Think of how things in nature have acted out recently.
         2. As the firstfruits of the harvest (Ex 23:19; Lv 23:10–11; Nu 18:12; Dt 18:4) indicate more is to come, so the Holy Spirit and His work guarantee future blessing. (TLSB)
         3. What are some firstfruits that we already have?
         4. How do those empower us even now?
         5. Christians have this status (sonship) now, and yet do not have it in its fullness. (TLSB)
      7. **Revelation 21:1 ESV:** *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.*
         1. *First heaven* … *passed away*. This fulfills the prediction Jesus makes in Mt 24:35. Also, Rm 8:19–21 suggests that there is continuity between the new creation and that which it replaces. However, certain things truly disappear: sin, death, and corruption. That which has been redeemed is transformed. (TLSB)
         2. For the people of the Middle East the sea was a big scary deal. The unpredictable storms that came up on the Sea of Galilee were very real examples of the danger of the sea. To no longer have a sea in the new earth does not mean that there will be no water in heaven. It symbolically conveys that everything threatening and evil is removed. (TLSB)
   4. What part of this earth will you not miss?
   5. Comments or questions?
3. ***What will heaven be like?***
   1. The Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2 – Dictionary describes it as the invisible world or universe from which God rules; the home of angels. Christ rules from heaven and receives believers there. It suggests seeing “Paradise.” – p. 896

Paradise from that same resource suggests “a park, orchard or pleasure ground. The Garden of Eden was a paradise. In the NT paradise is used to describe heaven, the home of those who die in Christ. – p. 942

Read the following verses from Genesis and the comments. What thoughts come to mind about the Garden of Eden before sin entered?

* + 1. **Genesis 1:27 ESV:** *So God created man in his own image,    in the image of God he created him;    male and female he created them.*
       1. In trying to understand the concept of the image of God, it may be helpful to describe the effect the divine image had on the personality of Adam and Eve – on their intellect, emotions and will. Unlike the mental dullness and ignorance we bring with us into the world, Adam and Eve understood perfectly with their intellect what God wanted them to know. While they possessed the image of God their emotions were in tune with God’s; they found their greatest happiness in God. And unlike the rebellious will of each of us brought into the world, their will was in complete harmony with God; what He wanted was what they wanted. Every impulse and desire of theirs was in tune with God’s good will. Created in the image of God they were human replicas of what God is like. (PBC)
       2. Moses gives a summary statement of the creation of mankind and details about it in chapter 2. Luther: “Moses puts the two sexes together and says that God created male and female in order to indicate that Eve, too, was made by God as a partaker of the divine image and of the divine similitude, likewise of the rule over everything. Thus even today the woman is the partaker of the future life, just as Peter says that they are joint heirs of the same grace (1 Peter 3:7). In the household the wife is a partner in the management and has a common interest in the children and the property, and yet there is a great difference between the sexes” (AE 1:69). (TLSB)
    2. **Genesis 1:31 ESV:** *And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*
       1. Creation is summarized by stating that it conformed to God’s intentions in the best possible way. (TLSB)
       2. Chemnitz: “The word tob refers to something which is beautiful or pleasant, which delights the eye of the beholder or the mind of one who considers it, as Gen. 3:6 says of Eve” LTh 1:190). As a result of the fall (chapter 3), the introduction of sin into the world, and our rejection of God and His will, we do not experience all of creation as “very good.” (TLSB)
  1. The musical group “Mercy Me” sings the song “I can only imagine.” (It is available on YouTube.) It is meant to depict what it will be like when we are in heaven. We can learn a number of things (mostly what is not going to be there which can be troublesome here on our present earth). But even then, in our sinful bodies and minds as well in sin-sickened world we really can’t even begin to imagine what heaven will be like.
  2. Conditions in the world to come will be very different from present day conditions. Certain institutions, essential and fundamental to his life on earth, will not be found in heaven. There will be no matrimony, no separate families, nationalities, and races. There will be no civil government for the punishment of evildoers, no earthly vocations to alleviate suffering and to provide the necessities of life. The wicked shall not live among the saints to vex and harass them. We shall live in the company of people made perfect. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 313/314)
  3. The illustrations below dramatize the bliss of heaven and accent the relationship that will exist between the triune God and the saints in the heavenly kingdom. What Christians will experience when they see Christ as He is transcends all human experience. Living in God’s presence, Christians will have a blissful knowledge of Him. Scripture does not reveal the scope and depth of that knowledge. (Confession the Gospel: A Lutheran Approach to Systematic Theology – Volume 2 p. 1162)
  4. As we have begun to live with Christ here on earth in the Church through His Word and Sacraments, so we will continue to live with Him after we die. Death is not an interruption of this fellowship with our Lord. Our life with Christ continues, even after death, even before the resurrection. Our departed friends and family members who lived with Christ here below by faith in His cross for their forgiveness even now live with Him and are comforted. Because our life with Christ is not interrupted by death, death for the Christian may be sweet and joyful, even in the midst of tears. (TLSB)
  5. The Bible portrays life in God’s presence, in our resurrected bodies in a resurrected universe, as so exciting and compelling that even the youngest and healthiest of us should daydream about it. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 161)
  6. Comments and Questions?
     1. **Revelation 7:9-10, 13-17 ESV: *9****After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,****10****and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”****13****Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?”****14****I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.****15****“Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.****16****They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.****7****For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*
        1. Revelation cannot be read and interpreted like most of the other books of the Bible. It is a kind of writing that is highly symbolic. It uses codes such as: numbers are symbolic, colors have meaning, and powerful visions of very strange creatures abound. Many parts of the code come from the OT and were understood by the people to whom John was writing. – Of 404 verses, 278 are from OT. (Good News – Revelation p. 10)
        2. The crowd of people before the throne of that is very true here God is *countless.* This may have reminded John of the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would be beyond counting—as numerous as the sand of the seashore and as the stars in the heavens. And this crowd standing before God’s throne is not only from the ethnic people of Israel, but from every ethnic group of people on earth. Certainly this demonstrates that the true Israel of God, represented on earth by the 144,000 (all Christians) and in heaven by this countless crowd before God’s throne, is all those who have the same faith as Abraham, both Jews and Gentiles. That faith alone justifies, the faith in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. (CC p. 193)
        3. The *white robes* here in 7:9 symbolize the purity and righteousness of Christ, which purity and righteousness have been given to his people because of his blood (7:14). Those on earth who overcome will be dressed in white. (CC p. 193)
        4. How are we already righteous?
        5. The heavenly crowd is also *carrying palm branches* in their hands. Palm branches appear only twice in the entire NT, here in Rev 7:9 and in John 12:13. This is the first time that John sees heavenly figures with palms, though Jewish tradition about palm branches goes back to the OT. (CC pp. 194-195)
        6. How are we already victorious?
        7. The “Hosanna!” cried on Palm Sunday means “Now save us.” In this vision, salvation is acclaimed as an accomplished fact. (TLSB)
        8. Because John’s vision includes the faithful from every nation and every time, it is appropriate to see those who yet live faithfully here on earth as part of that gathering. In fact, when Christians gather for worship in this world, they may be understood as participating by faith in the ongoing heavenly praise. (TLSB)
        9. The evil days immediately before Christ’s second coming, together with their sufferings and persecutions, are called the “great tribulation” (Mt 24:21). (CC pp. 197-199)
        10. What are the tribulations that Christians face today?
     2. **Revelation 22:15 ESV:** *Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.*
        1. In the OT “dog, wild dog” (כֶּלֶב) was a derogatory term for a male prostitute (Deut 23:19) and also a metaphor for an evil human enemy. (CC p. 638)
        2. Sorcerers” would include all practitioners of occultic arts (whether “good” or “bad” magic); such practice of these arts often involves the habitual use of drugs and potions. (CC p. 638)
        3. These were coarse sinners. Everyone whose life belies the gospel of Jesus Christ is excluded from God’s chosen people. (PBC)
        4. Comments or Questions?
  7. We ourselves shall be the same person we now are, but we will be changed. We shall have spiritual bodies, not subject to the same needs and laws which now govern us. We shall incorruptible bodies free from all traces and consequences of sin. We shall have strong bodies, free from all facilities, weaknesses, defects, and deformities. We shall have immortal bodies, which shall never die. We shall have glorious bodies, clothed with beauty, perfection, honor, and glory. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 314)
  8. The imperishable body will in some way be the transformed body that is currently wasting away. Changing skins or bodies is like changing clothes. Your new body will be a new form of clothing, but it will still be human clothing or flesh, not dinosaur skin, and will, in some way, be the transformed flesh and blood with which we lived in this earthly life. (Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – p. 181)

When you think of having a glorified physical body, where does your imagination lead you? What do you think that glorified body will be like? (Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – p. 184)

* 1. Every Sunday when you say, in the words of the Nicene Creed, “I look for the resurrection of the dead,” or, in the words of the Apostles’ Creed, “I believe in the resurrection of the body,” you confess that God will raise your body in the image of His Son, Jesus. This has been your hope since the day of your Baptism. (Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – p. 107)
     1. **Matthew 17:2** *And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.*
        1. Jesus already gave a foretaste of the transformation before His death through His Transfiguration. There His body glowed with the glory that belongs to Him as the Son of God, His divinity fully shining forth in His person and shared with His humanity. (Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoelke – p. 121)
        2. Jesus has already taught that, when he comes again in judgment to separate out the weeds from the wheat, the righteous will “shine forth like the sun. The glory of the righteous will be reflected glory that comes from their relationship with the father through the Son. (CC p. 853)
     2. **Philippians 3:20-21 ESV**: ***20****But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,****21****who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*
        1. In a far more sublime and important sense, Paul tells the Philippians, they should realize that their most important citizenship, their spiritual citizenship, is in heaven. Heaven is the real home of believers.
        2. Their heavenly citizenship should be reflected in the way believers live their lives here on earth. Citizens of heaven should not regard this world as a place to put down permanent roots, nor should they fix their hearts on the things of this world or regard them as permanent possessions. They should consider themselves strangers and pilgrims on earth, and their greatest concern should be with heavenly, spiritual things. (PBC)
     3. **1 Corinthians 15:42-44 ESV: *42****So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.****43****It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.****44****It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*
        1. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.
        2. Our earthly minds cannot understand the greatness of what the above passages describe. One way to help us understand just how enormous it is to have a perfect body is to list all of what is wrong with out body and realize none of it will be a part of us in heaven. Take a moment and list all the imperfections in your body which are a result of sin. Start with the top of your head and go to the bottom of your foot.
     4. How would describe what it will look like for you to bear the image of the risen Jesus in your resurrected body? (Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoelke – p. 123)
     5. How does knowing Jesus as the Lord of death and life enable you to enter into daily dying and rising? (Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoelke – p. 123)
  2. As for the soul, the image of God will be fully restored. As the image of God consists in blissful knowledge of God and in righteousness and true holiness, we shall then fully know God, His will and His ways. We shall understand what now is still dark to us. All our questions both with respect to certain mysteries of doctrine and to happenings in our personal lives will be fully answered. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 314)
  3. In “The Happiness of Heaven,” published in 1871, Father J. Boudreau tells of a kindhearted king who finds a blind, destitute orphan boy while hunting in a forest. The king takes the boy to his palace, adopts him as his son, and provides for his care. He sees that the boy receives the finest education. The boy is extremely grateful, and loves the king, his new father, with all his heart. When the boy turns twenty, a surgeon performs an operation on his eyes, and for the first time he is able to see. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 180)

This boy, once a starving orphan, has for some years been a royal prince, at home in the king’s palace. But something wonderful has happened, something far greater than the magnificent food, gardens, libraries, music, and wonders of the palace. The boy is finally able to see the father he loves. Boudreau writes, “I will not attempt to describe the joys that will overwhelm the soul of this fortunate young man when he first sees that king, of whose manly beauty, goodness power, and magnificence of his princely garments whereof he had also heard so much heretofore. Much less will I attempt to picture his exquisite and unspeakable happiness when he sees himself adopted into the royal family, honored and loved by all, together with all the pleasures of life within his reach….All this taken together in a beatific vision for him. (Heaven – Alcorn pp. 180-181)

The vision of God has a transforming power, writes Boudreau. Thus the soul, because she only sees God as He is, is filled to overflowing with all knowledge; she becomes beautiful with the beauty of God, rich with His wealth, holy with His holiness, and happy with Hus unutterable happiness. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 181)

* + 1. **1 John 3:2 ESV:** *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*
       1. John emphases the “now” and “not yet” nature of the believer’s relationship with the Father. We are now God’s children. It is a realized fact. Yet, at the same time, there is something awaiting us, as what we will be has not yet appeared. The holiness and righteousness that is ours by faith leads to palpable blessings in this life, such as a clean conscience, joy in the face of trouble and persecution (cf. Mt 5:10–12), and a peace that passes all understanding. In the future we will experience Christ in an even more direct and complete way, and, as Luther said, “Yet, we shall be like him. God is life. Therefore we, too, shall live. God is righteous. Therefore we, too, shall be filled with righteousness. God is immortal and blessed. Therefore we, too, shall enjoy everlasting bliss, not as it is in God but the bliss that is suitable for us” (AE 30:268). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 4)
       2. At this time our dignity as children of God, our new life obtained in our new birth is covered up by our sinful flesh as well as by cross and sorrow and so many humiliating experiences of life. But this disgraceful shroud shall someday completely be removed. (Stoeckhardt)
       3. How can take comfort in what is said in “a & b”?
       4. Comments or questions?
    2. **Psalm 17:15 ESV:** *As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.*
       1. The greatest blessing God gives his children is the joy of spending eternity dwelling in the presence of God and seeing him as he is. Although the joys of eternity will be many, the presence of God alone would be enough to satisfy us throughout eternity. When we have been purified from sin, we will be able to stand in the presence of the holy God without fear. Though each of us must pass through death, like David we have the confidence that we will awake in God’s presence and reign with him for ever and ever. (PBC)
       2. As so often, also here the troubles that completely surround a man are conceived as likely to continue as long as one lives; so complete deliverance from them will be possible only when this present life has run its course. From that point of view it should seem quite natural that the hope of the great deliverance that all saints cherish comes to the forefront here. (Leupold)
    3. **1 Corinthians 13:9-12 ESV: *9****For we know in part and we prophesy in part,****10****but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.****11****When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.****12****For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*
       1. Jesus assured His disciples that by continuing in the Word they would know the truth, and the truth would make them free (Jn 8:31-32). But while the knowledge we have is liberating and life-giving, it is still only partial. Our darkened minds find it difficult to comprehend God’s truths. And His Word still provides only glimpses of what will be fully revealed in eternity, when we will see “face to face” (1 Cor 13:12). (CC p. 471)
       2. Now the apostle’s knowledge of God and of divine things is only partial. But then his knowledge will be complete, just as God’s knowledge of him is complete. (CC p. 472)
  1. Make a list of all the things you don’t know about God. Then realize that which really matters will be known to you when you are in heaven.
  2. Comments or questions?
  3. There will be no old Adam, no temptation to contend with, no sin, no sorrow, not grief. There will be no jarring discords and differences among the saints, but the thoughts and desires, and actions of all will be in complete harmony with the will of God. There will be full satisfaction, perfect contentment, and absolute security. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 314)
     1. **Revelation 22:1-5 ESV:** *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****2****through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.****3****No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.****4****They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.****5****And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.*
        1. Remember that Revelation is highly symbolic with many connections to the Old Testament.
        2. John is shown “the river of the water of life” which is so pure that it is “clear as crystal” (22:1). In the Garden of Eden a river flowed which watered Eden and then became the source of four rivers which watered different regions of the earth (Gen 2:10–14). Would John on reflection be reminded of this river which watered Eden in its state of perfection? Here in Rev 22:1 the river is called “the water of life,” which is best understood as a symbol of that life which God alone can grant and sustain. In John 4:10–14 Jesus speaks of the “living water” which he gives and which, when received, becomes “a spring of water which wells up into eternal life” (CC pp. 623-624)
        3. Because of what Christ accomplished on another tree—the cross of Calvary—God’s people will again have free access to this tree; its fruit bestows immortality. For the present, the Holy Supper serves this function. (TLSB)
        4. In the restored Garden of Eden, the paradise of God, there shall no longer be “any curse” (22:3). The original curse of God upon the earth because of Adam’s sin (Gen 3:14–19) will be supplanted by God’s eternal blessing. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse on our behalf,” Paul reminds us in Gal 3:13 (cf. Rom 8:3; Gal 4:4–5). (CC pp. 628-629)
        5. In ancient times criminals were banished from the presence of the king (from his face). (CSB)
        6. The climactic statement in this vision of heaven, since beholding God face-to-face, living in His presence, and enjoying unmediated communion with Him is the greatest blessing of heaven. (TLSB)
        7. How does God walk among us in worship?
        8. List the comforts you find in this text.
        9. Comments or questions?
     2. **1 Peter 1:8 ESV:** *Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.*
        1. Joy is impossible to describe. Joy is impossible to exhaust in words. Joy is glorious and blissful, pure and serene. Joy is as a state similar to the state of transfiguration wherein Christ now is and wherefore we then shall partake. (Stoeckhardt)
        2. We all need this wake-up call – our number one priority needs always to be our relationship with our Savior, so that our reunion with Him at His reappearing will be full of praise, not dread. The more we ponder these sure promises of God, the more our insides will be full of joy and satisfaction. Self-pity, complaining, and envy will fade away. This joy is “inexpressible,” that is, you can feel it better than you can describe it. (PBC)
  4. To appreciate how this may look, get out your catechism and go through all of the commandments and list every sin forbidden in these charges. Then realize that you will not be guilty of any of them when you get to heaven.
  5. Comments or questions?
  6. Genesis describes the Garden of Eden as a place where Adam and Eve walked and talked in the presence of God in a physical world. The Bible describes the new heavens and new earth very much like that-a glorious physical place where we will live with our resurrected bodies. (The Lutheran Hour Ministries – The End of Time – Discussion Guide)
     1. **Leviticus 26:11-12 ESV: *11****I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you.****12****And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people*.
        1. God’s holy being and presence was represented in the tabernacle for children of Israel as they traveled to the Promised Land.
        2. God desired to walk among His people as He once did with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8). (TLSB)
        3. Imagine yourself walking and talking with God in heaven. What might you be anxious to ask Him?
     2. **Ezekiel 37:27 ESV:** *My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*
        1. This is a figurative representation of God dwelling in the midst of his people in incarnation of his Son and through the Holy Spirit during the church age and will accomplished fully in eternity. (CC)
        2. God’s residence on earth was not a matter of nature, but of election, of his condescending grace and salvific will to redeem.
  7. Randy Alcorn in his book “Heaven” writes: “I imagine our first glimpse of Heaven will cause us to gasp in amazement and delight. That first gasp will likely be followed by many more as we continually encounter new insights in that endlessly wonderful place. And that will be just the beginning, because we will not see our real eternal home – the New Earth – until after the resurrection of the dead. And it will be far better than anything we’ve seen. (Heaven – Alcorn pp. 17-18)
  8. We need to stop thinking of earth and heaven as opposites and instead see them as overlapping circles that share certain commonalties. C.S. Lewis proposed a similar view. He asked one to consider the hills and valleys of heaven to be not so much a copy of or substitute for the genuine article, but instead more as a diamond might be compared to coal or the flower to the root. (Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – p. 151)
  9. So look out a window. Take a walk. Talk with your friend. Uses your God-given skills to paint or draw or build a shed or write a book. But imagine it – all of it – in its original condition. The happy dog with the wagging tail, not the snarling beast, beaten and starved. The flowers un-wilted, the grass undying, the blue sky without pollution. People smiling and joyful, not angry, depressed, and empty. If you are not in a particularly beautiful place, close your eyes and envision the most beautiful place you have ever been- complete with palm trees, raging rivers, jagged mountains, waterfalls, or snow drifts. (Heaven – Alcorn p.18)

Think of friends or family members who loved Jesus and are with him now. Picture them with you, walking together in this place. All you have powerful bodies, stronger than those of an Olympic decathlete. You are laughing, playing, and reminiscing. You reach up to a tree to pick an apple or orange. You take a bite. It’s so sweet that it’s startling. You’ve never tasted anything so good. Now you see someone coming toward you. It’s Jesus with a big smile on his face. You fall to your knees in worship. He pulls you up and embraces you. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 18)

At last, you’re with the person you were made for, the place you were made to be. Everywhere you go there will be new people and places to enjoy, new things to discover. What’s that you smell? A feast. A party’s ahead. And you are invited. There’s exploration and work to be done – and you can’t wait to get started. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 18)

An old theologian once said, “who chides a servant for taking away the first course of a feast when the second consists of far greater delicacies?” Who then can regret that this present world passes away when he sees that an eternal world of joy is coming? The first course is grace, but the second is glory, and that is a much better as the fruit is better than the blossom. (Quote by Charles Spurgeon – Heaven – Alcorn p. 209)

Another way of looking at heaven is when we see beautiful flowers, roaring waterfalls, or amazing sunsets, we should yearn for our eternal home because these provide us with the glimpses of our heavenly home that is yet to come. We should not close our eyes to the scarred wonder of creation around us but take it all in and try to imagine it without sin, corruption or death. (Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – p. 151)

Comments or Questions?

* + 1. **Revelation 21:10-27 ESV: *10****And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,****11****having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.****12****It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed—****13****on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.****14****And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.****15****And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls.****16****The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal.****17****He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement.****18****The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass.****19****The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald,****20****the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.****21****And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.****22****And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.****23****And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.****24****By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,****25****and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.****26****They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.****27****But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*
       1. In the description of the new heaven and earth as the holy city Jerusalem and as the new Eden (22:1–5), God did not reveal to John how the newly restored creation in its geophysical dimensions and character will appear. It was not the Lord’s purpose to reveal details about the entirety of the cosmos and universe. In using the designations and descriptions of the holy city Jerusalem and the new Eden, God does give to John an awesome view of what it will mean for Christians to live with him in his holy presence (Jerusalem) under his perpetual care and blessings (Eden). Whatever the actual physical form of the restored earth, God and his Christ will dwell in the midst of his people for they will be God’s Holy of Holies, his holy Jerusalem. And whatever kind of physical life his people will live and experience in their resurrected bodies, God will richly supply their earthly needs as he did with Adam and Eve in the first paradise before the fall. (CC pp. 631-633)
       2. The “holy city Jerusalem” (v. 10), though this symbol sometimes represents heaven itself (22:2), it also stands for God’s people (21:2). Here, it seems to represent the latter. (TLSB)
       3. This “coming down” (v. 10) may well indicate that the new heaven and new earth will have some characteristics familiar to us who have lived on earth; in a sense, they will be “down to earth.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)
       4. This “radiance” (v.11) of the holy city appears like “a most precious stone, like a crystalized jasper,” a rare gem which is green in color “but lustrous as crystal.” (CC p. 610)
       5. Usually a wall (v. 12) around a city was for protection and defense. Such physical protection would not be a necessity for the bride of Christ in the new heaven and earth because all her enemies will have been vanquished. The “wall” is a symbol of God’s care and protection, which insured that the peace and security of his people would last forever. (CC pp. 610-11)
       6. The number 12 (v. 12) probably emphasizes the continuity of the NT church and the OT people of God. See v. 14, where the 12 foundations bear the names of the 12 apostles. (CSB)
       7. These guardian angels (v. 12) would remind John (as did the wall) that no enemy will enter the city ever again to hurt God’s people (CC pp. 612-613)
       8. The wall, the gates, and the angels tell us that our entrance into God's holy city of heaven is by God's plan, provision, and care alone.
       9. The picture of the angel taking a measurement (v. 15) underscores the perfection, splendor, and grand scale of the heavenly city. (TLSB)
       10. The square (and cube) were considered “perfect” shapes. C 1,200 mi (v 16) This city is thus larger than many nations. A perfect cube, just like the Most Holy Place in Solomon’s temple (1Ki 6:20). (TLSB)
       11. The mention of size implies that humans and angels are about the same size (v. 17). This might also convey that people will be like angels in the resurrection (Mt 22:30), though they do not become angels. (TLSB)
       12. Rev 21:18–21 describes the building material and the composition and adornment of the city, with its precious stones and gold. The color of the precious stones of “jasper” and “sardius” is akin to the description of God on his heavenly throne in 4:3, for the presence on the throne was “like in appearance to a jasper stone and a sardius.” This suggests that the holy city glows with and reflects the very glory of God himself, and so she reminds John of God’s splendid and glorious presence in the city. The city itself was “pure gold like clear glass” and its main street was “pure gold, like transparent glass.” This gold indicates that the city and its main street convey the supreme *royalty* of God’s glory. The “main street” is the very way of the royal majesty of God and the city is his royal palace. (CC p. 616-617)
       13. God gave the tabernacle and temples in order to mediate His presence on earth. In heaven, however, His people will see Him face-to-face and experience Him directly. Thus, a temple will be unnecessary (v. 22). (TLSB)
       14. Because God Himself is “light,” (v. 23) there is no need for any other source of illumination in heaven. There, people bask in the unmediated glory of His aura. (TLSB)
       15. Nations walking by its light (v. 24) emphasizes the complete fulfillment of God’s plan to save all people (cf Rev 7:9). This suggests the transformation rather than the annihilation of the old orders. (TLSB)
       16. No night and gates (v. 25) illustrate that evil once and for all has been vanquished; there is no need for security measures. (TLSB)
       17. In the new heaven and earth, all peoples and all nations and all kings (v. 26)—yea, the entire creation and all the heavenly hosts—will honor and praise God and the Lamb (cf. 4:1–5:14). (CC p. 621)
       18. With nothing impure or shameful (v. 27) entering is another reminder that future citizenship in heaven is secured through repentance and holiness. (TLSB)
       19. Those who cling to Jesus as their only Savior have their names written in the “Lamb’s Book of Life.”
       20. Have you ever come to a hotel and find that they don’t have a reservation for you? How does it make you feel that your reservation for heaven has not been misplaced or accidently lost?
       21. List all of the comforts you receive from this reading and its comments.
       22. Comments or questions?
    2. **John 14:1-4 ESV:** *“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.****2****In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?* ***3****And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.****4****And you know the way to where I am going.”* 
       1. These are Jesus’s words of comfort to His disciples’ right before His suffering and death.
       2. Trust is an imperative. It is the cure for their fear.
       3. In verse 2 “dwelling places” depicts not temporary housing, such as a hotel room, but permanent residence with the Father in heaven. (TLSB) Also in verse 2 Jesus gives His word that He is not messing with them.
    3. **Luke 22:30 ESV:** *that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*.
       1. Eating with others was more than simple association, eating with a person indicated acceptance and recognition (cf. Ac 11:3; 1 Co 5:11; Gal 2:12). (CSB)
       2. This verse is yet another reference to table fellowship in this scene: “in order that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.” This dialog is closely associated with the Words of Institution. (CC p. 848)
       3. At the kingdom’s banquet, the apostles sit at privileged places with the King of heaven. (TLSB)
       4. Comments or questions?
  1. Like Christ, we too will be recognizable after the resurrection. In deed, who and what we really are will be clearer than ever. (Heaven – Morgan and Peterson p. 34) Several examples from Scripture are listed below.
     1. **Matthew 17:1-4 ESV:** *And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.****2****And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.****3****And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.****4****And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.”*
        1. Moses and Elijah appeared to them, speaking together with Jesus. (CC p. 850)
        2. The disciples knew Moses and Elijah whom they had never seen before.
     2. **2 Samuel 12:23 ESV:** *But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.”*
        1. King David knew that when he died, he would rise up on the Last Day and live eternally with God. Yet, when his infant sons died, David did not speak about his hope of going to be with God. Instead, he spoke about his expectation of again seeing his beloved child. (Good News – Heaven p. 10)
        2. *I will go to him.*† Like the child, David will die and join him in the grave. Perhaps hope of eternal life is also expressed. David did believe in heaven and this where he join his son. (CSB)
        3. Who would you go looking for when you get to heaven?
        4. Comments or questions?
     3. **1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 ESV: *14****For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.****15****For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord  that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.****16****For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.****17****Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.****18****Therefore encourage one another with these words.*
        1. St. Paul comforted the Thessalonians, who wondered about what will happen on the Last Day to their loved one who died in the faith. These words assure us that the Last Day will include not only the joy of seeing Jesus return, but also that we will have a joyous reunion with those who have already died in the faith. (Good News – Heaven p. 10)
        2. Those who died in Christ will have no disadvantage when the Lord returns. The second coming will be seen by them as well as the living. (TLSB)
  2. God created the family before the fall, and it was essential for the fulfillment of human beings’ task to fill the earth and care for it. Paul regards marriage as a picture of the greater, more intimate reality of our union with Christ. In this way the earthly family is a picture of Christ and the church (our heavenly family). This implies that our relationship with our with all the people that surround us in heaven. (Heaven – Morgan and Peterson p. 34)

With no need for marriage in heaven there will also be no need for sex. God created us male and female, in His image and both of that image and our genders will continue in the world to come. We will not need sexual relations. (Heaven – Morgan and Peterson p. 34)

But will the lack of sex make us dissatisfied in the resurrection? No, because we will be fulfilled by our relationship with the living God and other believers, which will be better than our best relationships, including sexual one, now. In fact, sex only approximates the kind of intimacy we will experience in the new creation. (Heaven – Morgan and Peterson p. 34)

In a nutshell, while the marriage bond and sexual relations are dissolved at death, in the world to come the most important aspects of marriage will be improved. Fellowship with God and one another and deep relationships will be better than we can even imagine at present. We will love our spouses more and enjoy their company forever. (Heaven – Morgan and Peterson pp. 34-35)

* + 1. **Matthew 22:30** **ESV**: *For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.*
       1. Jesus’ point is that earthly marriages are no longer binding once one partner dies. Cf Rm 7:1–3. (TLSB)
       2. We will like angels but do not become angels after death. (TLSB)
    2. **Genesis 1:28 ESV:** *And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*
       1. God extended to humankind the blessing of procreative power that He had given to animals. (TLSB)
       2. This will not be necessary in heaven.
    3. **1 Corinthians 7:9 ESV:** *But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*
       1. “Even though they abstain from the act, their hearts are so full of unchaste thoughts and evil lusts that there is a continual burning and secret suffering, which can be avoided in the married life” (LC I 215). (TLSB)
       2. Since we will be perfect and not able to be tempted this reason for married is nullified.
       3. Comments or questions?
  1. When we think of ruling we’ve been conditioned to associate governing with self-promoting arrogance, corruption, inequality, and inefficiency. But these are a perversion, not inherent properties of leadership. Ruling involves responsibility and servanthood – perhaps that’s why some today’s people don’t look forward to it. But, ruling is spoken of in Scripture as seen below:
     1. **Revelation 2:10, 26-27 ESV*: 10****Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.* ***26****The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations,****27****and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.*
        1. He promises to share this glory with those who conquer and remain faithful to him. (CC p. 84)
        2. This power is not exercised by anyone while he is still here in time and on this earth, because he receives it only after his “end.” Having gone to heaven, he there rules with Christ over the nations, that is, the heathen, as is evident from what follows. (Poellot p. 50)
        3. Having the “crown of life” we will then witness the condemnation of sinners on the Last Day, thus “participating” in Christ’s judgment of all people.
     2. **1 Corinthians 6:2-3 ESV: *2****Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases?****3****Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!*
        1. Jesus promised that He would enthrone us with Him to participate in the judgment. (TLSB)
        2. “The present tense denotes the certainty of the event.” This eschatological judgment is already underway as Christians proclaim the Gospel, which dethrones worldly wisdom and the ruler of this age. (CC)
     3. **Revelation 20:4a ESV:** *Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed.*
        1. This scene is enacted in heaven, not on earth. It is simultaneous with Satan’s binding. The “authority to judge” is a picture of the saints sharing in God’s kingly rule is first presented in Dn 7:13–14, 26–27. The NT presents this picture repeatedly (cf Mt 19:28; 1Co 6:2). (TLSB)
        2. The power of judgment was given to them to exercise on behalf of God. The apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon says that God’s people will be the judges over the nations of the world (Wisdom 3:8). (CC pp. 556-557)
     4. **Matthew 19:28 ESV:** *Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*
        1. Although the apostles are simply disciples of Jesus along with others, they will participate in some active way in the universal judgment that the Son of Man will carry out when He comes in His glory and gives to each person according to his work of either following Jesus or rejecting Him. (CC p. 987)
        2. This is not about earning our way into heaven. It is about believing in Christ as our Savior. **John 6:29**, “*Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”*
        3. Comments or questions?
  2. There is a painting by Flemish artist Pieter Brueghel at the end of this study. This painting reveals that, too often, our dreams of heaven are little more than extensions of our fleshly lusts and desires. However, according to God’s Word, heaven will be far more than any human painting can ever depict. Our minds are so limited that even the most brilliant person cannot begin to conceive of the glories of heaven (Romans 8:18). (Good News – Heaven pp. 24-25)
     1. **Isaiah 25:6 ESV:** *On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples   a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,    of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.*
        1. “This mountain”is the place where God dwells and dispenses his grace through His appointed means. On Mount Calvary, God dwelling in Christ, procured grace for us. In our present age Zion’ equivalent is the church, wherein the means of grace are found. Here the Lord will exhibit his victorious reign before his people. Ultimately this is a description of heaven. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)
        2. *Rich food* is symbolic of great spiritual blessings. (CSB) This will be a feast like no other. (TLSB)
        3. The banquet Isaiah described is one of the richest the ancient world could imagine. The language emphasizes that it is the best. The wine ages in order to increase its color and quality. The meat was the best that the ancient world could provide. It was fat and rich. In our day we taught to avoid fat, but in the ancient world fat was highly desired. The banquet is the banquet of God’s grace. The Savior-God – the Lord Almighty – has prepared the best His love could offer: rich compassion, wonderful forgiveness, and every satisfying food for the soul. (PBC)
     2. **Matthew 22:1-2 ESV:** *And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying,****2****“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.*
        1. The wedding feast of celebration might last 7 days (Jud 14:12) or even 14 days (Tobit 8:20). Certainly it was quite an honor to be invited, and the host would have made lavish and expensive preparations. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)

The eternal feast will last forever. Through the faith that the Holy Spirit worked within us we are a part of this great scene. The greatest and most lavish spiritual blessing will be ours.

* + - 1. The provisions of God for the happiness of men are most abundant and free, and His invitations to them to come and receive according to their wants, are most urgent and sincere. (Concordia Bible)
      2. Eating at the feast of rich food and well-aged wine is the sign of participation in the resurrection kingdom of God where death is swallowed up forever. You’ll know you are in the resurrection kingdom if you are eating the food that never dies, that comes from the source of life itself. So the Church’s meals on earth become signs of the coming rule and reign of God and of the resurrected life. Every week that congregations celebrate the Sacrament, the Church remembers this cosmic vision of the resurrection and participates in its foretaste as the baptized eat together. (Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – p. 127)
      3. Comments or questions?
  1. A sainted friend of mine once said that that we will have work to do in heaven. The idea of working in Heaven is foreign to many people.

With the divine image completely restored, the will of Christians will be set free from its bondage to sin. It will reflect the holiness and righteousness of God and will be filled with perfect love for God and all inhabitants of heaven. When Christians behold God face-to-face, they will do the will of God voluntarily and without any coercion. This is no time of inactivity and idleness, but a Sabbath rest when the drudgery, toil, competition, failures, and frustrations that characterize present existence will end. It will be a time of joyous and satisfying activity, which will find perfect fulfillment in seeing God and living in His presence. (Confessing the Gospel: A Lutheran Approach to Systematic Theology – Volume 2 pp. 1162-1163)

Randy Alcorn states: Work wasn’t the problem; it was sin that made work a curse. **Revelation 22:3** says, *“No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.”*

Servants are people who are active and occupied, carrying out tasks. We’ll also have work to do, satisfying and enriching work that we can’t wait to get back to, work that will never be drudgery. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 331)

* + 1. **Genesis 2:15 ESV:** *The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.*
       1. Man is now charged to govern the earth responsibly under God’s sovereignty. (CSB)
       2. In accordance with his role as God’s image (1:26), the man is placed in the garden to tend it as God's Seward and manager of creation (cf. 1:28). This work is neither punishment nor toilsome. Work only becomes a source of hardship and suffering as a result of the fall (3:17--19). (TLSB)
    2. **Isaiah 32:15-20 ESV:** *until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.****16****Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.****17****And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.****18****My people will abide in a peaceful habitation,    in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.****19****And it will hail when the forest falls down, and the city will be utterly laid low.****20****Happy are you who sow beside all waters,    who let the feet of the ox and the donkey range free.*
       1. *till the Spirit.*† The outpouring of the Spirit is linked with abundance also in 44:3. It is linked with justice and righteousness in v. 16 and with peace, quietness and confidence in v. 17. (CSB)
       2. He refers to the farmers who sow the seed around the overflowing waters. Thus the apostles sow the seed around the waters, that is, among the nations. There the “oxen,” that is, the preachers, and the “asses,” the godly burden-bearers of Christ, yet sluggish in the flesh, are permitted to range free. So you see, the Gospel provides “oxen,” that is, priests and teachers, and “asses,” that is, godly men. Thus in this chapter the prophet very briefly passes through various disasters after the reign of Hezekiah to the reign of Christ. In the following chapter he returns to the king of Assyria. (Luther)
    3. **Hebrews 4:9-11 ESV: *9****So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,****10****for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.****11****Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.*
       1. God has fully completed the six days of His work in creation; thus, His Sabbath rest extends throughout time. In Christ, God’s people enter into God’s day of rest and experience the peace He gives. (TLSB)
       2. Rest implies cessation from work, a laying down of that which tires. So also with the heavenly rest which Christ brings and to which He leads. “Anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work,” the author reminds us. Before faith, man seeks to work out his own salvation. (PBC)
  1. At the end of the novella “the Great Divorce,” C.S. Lewis speaks of a painter who wanted to be in heaven to paint it. The painter wanted to contribute something of himself, his skill and art, to heaven, and without the opportunity to do so, he saw no purpose or joy in being there. Lewis’s point is that heaven, or the new heaven and the new earth, is a complete gift, an endless opportunity to come and see, to come and feed. On what? On the life of God that dwells in and fills the new creation. Our cultural realities, such as painting, may find a place, but only as they help us to see the endless wonder of God’s love and grace streaming through all of His transformed creation. Indeed, we will be able to feed endlessly with our eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands, and feet upon an abundance that will never cease. Disney World can’t even hold a flickering flame to what God has in store! (Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke pp. 177-178)

The life of the Trinity will permeate the entire new creation. When we eat and drink, when we laugh and sing, when we touch and embrace, when we are overwhelmed at the glory of the vistas of the new creation, when we see and interact with animals and plants of every type that God created without threat or harm, when we do all these things, we will share in the life of the God whose Word and breath is their very life and existence. (Death, Heaven, Resurrection and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – p. 178)

When you think of the abundance of the new heaven and earth, what do you imagine? How would you describe your ideal of the new heaven and earth? How does it compare with God’s vision? (Death, Heaven, Resurrection and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – p. 128)

Comments or questions?

1. ***Where is Heaven?***
   1. The location of the new heaven and new earth cannot be fixed and determined. We may say that heaven is wherever God reveals Himself to us in His uncovered glory, and where we see Him face to face. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 315)
   2. We sometimes think of heaven abstractly, as somewhere “up there,” but heaven is wherever Jesus is. Because Jesus is present among us in the gifts of Word and Sacrament, then heaven itself is present among us. It is the world of “angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven.” (Heaven on Earth: The Gifts of Christ in the Divine Service – Arthur A. Just Jr. p. 16)
      1. **Isaiah 66:1 ESV:** *Thus says the Lord: “Heaven is my throne,   and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me,    and what is the place of my rest?*
         1. God cannot be locked up within walls. Cf Mt 5:34–37. Is 6:1 gives a similar view of the Lord, where the edge of His garment fills the temple. Yet, the One who is high and lifted up condescends to be enshrined in the heart of everyone who is “of a contrite and lowly spirit” (57:15). (TLSB)
         2. The answers to the questions in this verse are “nowhere” and “anywhere.” Yahweh is making three interrelated claims: (1) he has the power to create everything; (2) he already has provided the place in which he deigns to dwell; and (3) by identifying the divine “footstool” as “the earth,” against the usage of Zion or its temple in such contexts (Pss 99:5; 132:7; Lam 2:1; 1 Chr 28:2), he subtly shifts the focus from Jerusalem to the cosmic temple of all creation. “ ‘Do I myself not fill the heavens and the earth?’ the utterance of Yahweh” (Jer 23:24). Commenting on Is 66:1, Luther writes: “God is inside, outside, below, above the world. He sits outside of heaven and has His feet on the earth. That is, He sits on all creatures.” The Reformer employs this idea in his treatise *This Is My Body*: (CC)
      2. **Genesis 28:12 ESV:** *And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!*
         1. Luther: “This dream signified that infinite, inexpressible, and wondrous mystery of the incarnation of Christ, who was to descend from the patriarch Jacob. (AE 5:217-218). (TLSB)
         2. This is a wonderful ascent and descent of the angels, to see the highest and the lowest completely united in one and the same Person, the highest God lying in the manger” (AE 5:217–218). (TLSB)
   3. How can we experience a piece of heaven while still on earth?
   4. Comments or questions?
2. ***Will Everyone Go To Heaven?***
   1. Scripture in many passages teaches that not everyone goes to heaven. Below are but a few samples:
      1. **Daniel 12:2 ESV:** *And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*
         1. A clear reference to a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. Cf. Isa 26:19; Jn 5:24–30. (CSB)
         2. This verse shows us the reality at the Last Day when Christ returns. Those who have been faithful and survived the great tribulation will be joined with Christ, and those who have died in the faith will awake and arise bodily from the grave and join Christ. Those who died as unbelievers will also rise bodily but to everlasting shame and contempt. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)
      2. **Matthew 25:41, 46 ESV: *41****“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.****46****And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*
         1. Before God there is no predetermined “left hand” meaning eternal damnation, but only a “right hand” signifying life everlasting. It is really upsetting of God’s plan that “any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9).
         2. Since, however men willfully transgressed His commandments, punishment became necessary, justice must be executed. Sternly the Judge addresses Himself to those at the left.
         3. Comments or questions?
3. ***Are there degrees of glory in Heaven?***
   1. The joys and pleasures of heaven are so great that it is not possible adequately to describe them in words of human tongue. Unless we were changed, we could not grasp them even in heaven. While all saints in heaven enjoy perfect bliss, there will be degrees of glory. Greater glory is given as a reward, not of merit, but of grace, to those who in their lives on earth showed their faith in consecrated service to the Lord. (A Summary of Christian Doctrine – Edward W.A. Koehler p. 315)
   2. There are no degrees of bliss, because all the blessed are perfectly happy, that is, every one of them will find full contentment for himself in beholding God. However, Scripture does teach that there are degrees of glory corresponding of work and fidelity here on earth. Luther: “It is true, there will be a difference in yonder life, according as they have labored and lived here. For example, St. Paul was an Apostle, Samuel or Isaiah a Prophet, etc. One will have greater brightness than the other because he worked or suffered more in his office…Thus everyone will have his distinction and glory according to his office and still one God and Lord will be in all, and one the same joy and bliss. In his person none shall be more or have more than the other, St Peter no more than you and I. None the less there must be a difference because of the works. For God did not do through Paul what He did through Isaiah, and vice versa. For that reason everyone will bring along his works, through which he will shine and praise God so that people will say: St. Peter has done more than I or another. This man or this woman has led such a fine life and done such great things. In short, all are to be alike before God in faith and grace and celestial bliss, but they are to differ in their works and honor.” (St. L. VIII:1223 f.) Self-evidently degrees of glory in heaven will not call forth envy, but only praise of God because sin has been completely eliminated. (Christian Dogmatics – F. Pieper – Volume 3 pp. 552-553)
      1. **Daniel 12:3 ESV:** *And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.*
         1. Their glory is a blessing of God’s grace. The progress of that life which shall be after death is better than that which is passed in sorrow and pain before death. (TLSB)
         2. The choirs of apostles, martyrs and priests shining like glorious stars, might give light throughout the world. (TLSB)
      2. **2 Corinthians 9:6 ESV:** *The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*
         1. Paul quotes and applies folk wisdom to disclose another facet of God’s bountiful race. Not only does He freely pardon our sins and adopt us as sons and daughters, but He also promises rich reward as we keep His commands, however imperfectly, and echo His own generosity, however faintly (with what C. S. Lewis called “gift-love” to God in *The Four Loves*). “Works and troubles do not merit justification, but other payments.… The fulfilling of the Law earns a reward, for a reward properly relates to the Law. Yet we should be mindful of the Gospel, which freely offers justification for Christ’s sake. We neither obey the Law, nor can obey it, before we have been reconciled to God, justified, and reborn. Nor would fulfilling the Law please God, unless we were accepted because of faith. People are accepted because of faith” (Ap V 246–47). (TLSB)
         2. What are some examples of sowing and reaping sparingly?
         3. Men will be rewarded in proportion to what, from love to Christ, they do for His cause. (CB)
      3. **Matthew 5:11-12 ESV: *11****“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.****12****Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*
         1. Though Jesus used this term when referring to heavenly blessings, He taught that the reward would be based on God’s goodness, not the amount of work done (cf 20:1–15). Any reward our heavenly Father gives is an expression of His grace. “We confess that eternal life is a reward; it is something due because of the promise, not because of our merits” (Ap V 242). John Hus: “When [a disciple] has patiently continued to endure[,] it helps to purify him as tools [purify] iron, and fire gold, and it helps to increase his reward of beatitude” (*The Church*, p 270). (TLSB)
         2. While this is clearly in the future, it is already a reality in the heavens (God’s presence). (The Sermon on the Mount – David P. Scaer – CPH – p. 91)
         3. Comments or questions?
4. ***What are few things we can learn or know about Hell?***
   1. Hell and damnation are not a fiction, but a stern and dreadful reality.
   2. All suffering, pain, and narcissism of this life will be amplified in hell because the presence of God’s light will not shine there to drive away all forms of human evil and misery. (Death, Resurrection, Heaven, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – p. 135)
   3. There will be fire. But will it be actual flames or are the Scriptures speaking metaphorically? The description of hell as a place of fire can be interpreted either direction. Given that I find it compelling to see hell as the place of utter isolation and loneliness in separation from God and God’s kingdom, I tend to interpret the firs of hell as forms of extreme personal agony and anguish brought on the person by rejecting God and relying solely on him/herself, rather than actual flames. But we can have different theological opinions about this. Death, Resurrection, Heaven, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – p. 135)
   4. Cut off from communion with God and others, those who are in hell are captive to the dungeons of their own minds. C.S. Lewis’s depiction of the emperor Napoleon as residing in hell captures this narcissistic captivity:

“Two chaps made the journey to see him. They’d started long before I came, of course, but I was there when they came back. About fifteen thousand years of our time it took them. We’ve picked out the house by now. Just a little pin prick of light and nothing else near it for millions of miles.” (Death, Resurrection, Heaven, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – p. 135)

“But they got there?” “That’s right. He’d built himself a huge house all in the Empire style – rows of windows flaming with light, though it shows only show as a pin prick from where I live.” “Did they see Napoleon?” “That’s right. They went up and looked through one of the windows. Napoleon was there all right.” (Death, Resurrection, Heaven, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – pp. 135-136)

“What was he doing?” “Walking up and down – up and down all the time – left-right, left-right – never stopping for a moment. The two chaps watched him for over a year and he never rested. And muttering to himself all the time. ‘It was Soult’s fault. It was Ney’s fault. It was Josephine’s fault. It was the fault of the Russians. It was the fault of the English.’ Like that all the time. Never stopped for a moment. A little fat man and he looked kimd of tired. But he didn’t seem able to stop it.” (Death, Resurrection, Heaven, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – p. 136)

Turned in on themselves, those in hell, according to Lewis’s visualization, become increasingly less physically human and more life waifs and ghosts. (Death, Resurrection, Heaven, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoeltke – p. 136)

* + 1. **2 Thessalonians 1:9 ESV:** *They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.*
       1. Destruction means something like “complete ruin.” Here it means being shut out from Christ’s presence. This eternal separation is the penalty of sin and the essence of hell. (CSB)
       2. Everlasting fire, chastisement, ruin, punishment, and judgment describe the end of those who reject God’s mercy. Not an annihilation but a complete and final separation from God, from beholding the face of Jesus. This is hell (cf Mt 25:31–46). (TLSB)
    2. **Revelation 20:10 ESV: *10****and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*
       1. Satan and his demonic host are finally cast into the place where they will suffer eternal punishment. This was the punishment they earned by their continual opposition to God’s plan of redemption and restoration. (TLSB)
       2. Its fiery torments are never extinguished (Mk 9:47–48). “The breath of the Lord God like a flow of burning sulfur sets it on fire” (Is 30:33). (CC p. 587)
    3. **Luke 16:19-31 ESV: *19****“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.****20****And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,****21****who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.****22****The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried,****23****and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.****24****And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’****25****But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.****26****And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’****27****And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—****28****for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’****29****But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’****30****And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’****31****He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”*
       1. Curiously, the rich man does not speak words of repentance, for he seems to realize that his condition of torment is permanent. His cry for mercy is *not* a cry of repentance, but a plea for help that results from desperate situation.
       2. The fixed chasm mean that nothing can bridge the gap after death (cf Heb 9:27). (TLSB)
       3. What might be some examples of how our society today is insensitive and undiscerning?
       4. Comments or questions?

1. ***What are some warning signs about end of the world coming?***
   1. Jesus return will be unexpected and will find many unprepared. Humanity in general will be insensitive to and undiscerning of the signs God provides as reminders of His coming and as means to urge repentance and an attitude of watchfulness. (Confessing the Gospel: A Lutheran Approach to Systematic Theology – Volume 2 p. 1152)
   2. Because God wants all men to come to the truth and be saved, He gives numerous opportunities to everyone. Out of His love God also gives many warning about the coming of the judgment. Below are a number of texts that provide proof of His concern.
      1. **Matthew 24:36-44 ESV: *36****“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son but the Father only.****37****For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.****38****For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,****39****and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.****40****Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left.****41****Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.****42****Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.****43****But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.****44****Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*
         1. “Christ according to His human nature› … knows some things and is ignorant of others” (FC SD VIII 74). (TLSB)
         2. Noah’s preaching and building of the ark were clear warnings that God was preparing to judge wickedness by sending a flood. Still, people were unprepared when the flood came. So it will also be at the end of time. (TLSB)
         3. Busyness is not just a modern day problem. People at Noah’s time were busy with their daily routines and totally forgot about God. People in every period of time will be indifferent to Christ and the Gospel. – The emphasis is not how wicked the world was in the days of Noah before the flood but on their indifference. They were caught up in the regular routine of eating, drinking, marrying, things not evil in themselves. Their apathy to the warnings of Noah and the huge boat he was building led to the fact that they “knew nothing” (V. 39) until they were carried away in the flood. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)
         4. The phrase “will be taken” is often used to means accepted or preserved. Since the text speaks of the final coming of Jesus these verses do not support the “Left Behind” theory as written of by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)
         5. The sudden nature of Christ’s return requires that His people remain ever vigilant. (TLSB)
         6. What might be a greatest distraction for us today?
         7. Comments or questions?
      2. **Matthew 25:1-13 ESV:** *“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.****2****Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.****3****For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them,****4****but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.****5****As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.****6****But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’****7****Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.****8****And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’****9****But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’****10****And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.****11****Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’****12****But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’****13****Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.*
         1. The ten virgins were the bridesmaids, who were responsible for preparing the bride to meet the bridegroom. (CSB)

Scripture repeatedly compares the relationship between Christ and the Church to that of husband and wife (most famously in Eph 5:22-33). This parable uses similar though distinct imagery. Jesus is the Bridegroom; the virgins represent members of the church on earth. (TLSB)

On the wedding day, the bridegroom would dress in wedding garments, and his friends would escort him to the house of the bride. The bride would come out to meet them with her friends. The whole group would joyously parade to the home that the groom had prepared. Jesus used this imagery to describe His relationship to the Church: “In My Father’s house are many room…I go to prepare a place for…If I go …I will come again (John 14:2-3). The Christian life is like a betrothal. Heaven will be like marriage. (TLSB)

* + - 1. The lamps were torches that consisted of a long pole with oil-drenched rags at the top. (Small clay lamps would have been of little use in an outdoor procession.) (CSB)
      2. The word “foolish” is the Greek root for the English word *moron*. Webster’s defines *moron* as a person who is notably stupid or lacking in good judgment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)
      3. Streets if even large cities had no public lighting. The foolish virgins do not consider the possibility that the bridegroom might be delayed, and so they bring no extra oil for their lamps. The oil represents a faith continually sustained by the means of grace, thus able to endure until Christ’s return. (TLSB)
      4. Many early Christians expected Jesus’ return in their generation. This parable implies that Jesus might not come as quickly as some expected, while encouraging the Church not to lose hope. (TLSB)
      5. The fact that all must fend for themselves underscores the individuality of the Christian faith. We cannot rely on the merits of others or the intercession of saints. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)
      6. What can we learn from this section?
      7. Comments or questions?
    1. **Mark 13:33-37 ESV: *33****Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.****34****It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.****35****Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows or in the morning—****36****lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.****37****And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”*
       1. The text points to the face–to–face encounter of the reader with the Lord, whether it be at the Second Coming of Christ or at death prior to the Second Coming. For the unbeliever, the words of the text are a call to repentance. For the believer, they are an exhortation to continual repentance and preparation for the day when he or she will meet the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)
       2. Jesus speaks here as a man. In His state of humility, Jesus did not always speak from His divine power or foreknowledge. (TLSB)
    2. **Matthew 24:5 ESV:** *For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.*
       1. False christs had begun to appear even before Jesus came. Gamaliel says, “some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be some be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too killed, and all his followers were scattered” (Acts 5:36,37). (PBC)
       2. Since that time such false prophets have continued to appear in a steady stream. In our own country, in comparatively recent times, we have seen Sun Myung Moon, a cult leader from Korea; Jim Jones, whose followers committed mass suicide at Jonestown in Guyana; and David Koresh, whose followers perished in flames at Waco, Texas. (PBC)
       3. Comments or questions?
    3. **Matthew 24:6-8 ESV: *6****And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.****7****For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.****8****All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.*
       1. Because geopolitical conflicts and natural disasters are common, they cannot be used to determine the date of the end of the world. The frequency of such signs reminds us that we always need to be prepared for Jesus’ return. (TLSB)
       2. Birth pains typically become more frequent and intense as the time of delivery approaches. So also it will be in the end times. The severity and frequency of cataclysmic events will increase. (TLSB)
       3. In what way is some of this already happening?
    4. **Matthew 24:9 ESV:** *“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.*
       1. Jesus does not identify those who will persecute His followers. In every generation, of course, there are some who oppose Jesus’ cause and so seek to harm His Church. (TLSB)
       2. Who do you see as persecuting the Church today?
       3. One should not interpret this oracle in exclusively political terms. (TLSB)
    5. **Matthew 24:12 ESV:** *And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.*
       1. Jesus does not identify those who will persecute His followers. In every generation, of course, there are some who oppose Jesus’ cause and so seek to harm His Church. (TLSB)
       2. Doctrinal corruption always produces a deterioration of morality and ethics. (TLSB)
       3. Would we say that many denominations are seeing doctrinal corruption today?
    6. **2 Timothy 4:3-4***, 3For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths*.
       1. Desiring to hear something new and entertaining. (TLSB)
       2. Teachers who tell them what they want to hear, rather than what God declares in His Word. (TLSB)
       3. Ultimately, every false doctrine is a “myth.” (PBC)
       4. What are people hearing today that "suits their own passions?
    7. **Matthew 24:14 ESV:** *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*
       1. The world will have the chance to hear the Gospel before Jesus returns in glory. This is not only a testimony to God’s all-encompassing grace but also to Jesus’ universal lordship and role as judge. (TLSB)
       2. Think of the many means we have to convey the Gospel today. There are more Lutherans in Africa than in the USA.
       3. Will that hearing come through us?
       4. Comments or questions?
    8. **Matthew 24:29 ESV:** *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*
       1. What Jesus is describing are not just natural events, such as eclipses or meteors falling into the atmosphere, but the dissolution of the universe when he returns on the Last Day. (PBC)
       2. Used broadly for the troubles described in vv 5–28, some of which were fulfilled in AD 70; others will be fulfilled just before Christ returns. The character of the prophecy warns us against trying to calculate the exact time of Jesus’ return. (TLSB)

1. ***How can we be absolutely sure (not just hope) that we are going to Heaven?***
   1. Faith in the Redeemer is the only way and it is the sure way that leads to heaven.
      1. **Acts 4:12 ESV:** *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*
         1. Jesus comes to us by means of His Name (Word). That Name creates faith. And by faith in His Name, He saves us. No second, no substitute, no alternative – faith is that Name alone, “given to men,” for all people, for all time. Again, beyond any shadow of a doubt, we are included! “One little Word” and Satan was stopped for now. The Sadducees, who had caused the arrest, were literally left speechless. (LL)
         2. Christianity is the one true faith because Jesus, the only source of salvation, recues us from the evil one. He delivers all people from a verdict of damnation and heals ills of body and soul. “Christ’s name is received only by faith. Therefore, we are saved by confidence in Christ’s name, and not by our own efforts
      2. **J**oh**n 14:6 ESV:** *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*
         1. Everything of God has its source in Christ and is reached through Christ. We must keep on trusting in Him. We approach the Father through Jesus. (PBC)
         2. There is no other way, no greater truth, and no other life. All are found in Jesus, and Jesus is found the Father in heaven. (LifeLight)
      3. **John 6:28-29 ESV: *28****Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”****29****Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”*
         1. They are thinking of the multitudinous legal works required by Judaism. (Buls)
         2. Note that "work" is singular. The verb "believe" is in the present tense, a continued believing. (Buls)
      4. **John 3:16 ESV:** *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*
         1. The promise belongs to everyone who believes. It is universal. No one who believes is excluded. At the same time the promise belongs to each one who believes. It is personal. God knows our names, and each of us has eternal life. (PBC)
         2. That is the whole point of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in verses 1-10. Faith in Christ is always the God-given modus of salvation, not the man-generated causa of salvation. (Buls)
      5. **Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV: *8****For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,****9****not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
         1. Grace is utter generosity, unselfish, spontaneous, recklessly prodigal generosity, which acts wholly out of loving concern for the other’s need, even if he is completely unworthy of the love and help thus offered him.
         2. This passage establishes the necessity of faith in Christ as the only way of being made right with God. (CSB)
   2. In 1952, young Florence Chadwick stepped into the waters of the Pacific Ocean off Catalina Island, determined to swim to the shore of mainland California. She’d already been the first woman to swim the English Channel both ways. The weather was foggy and chilly; she could hardly see the boats accompanying her. Still, she swam for fifteen hours. When she begged to be taken out of the water along the way, her mother, in a boat alongside, told her she was close and that she could make it. Finally, physically and emotionally exhausted, she stopped swimming and was pulled out. It wasn’t until she was on the boat that she discovered the shore was less than a half a mile away. At the news conference the next day she said, “All I could see was the fog….I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it.” (Heaven – Alcorn p. xx)

Consider her words: “I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it.” For believers, that shore is Jesus and being with him in the place that he promised to prepare for us, where were will be with him forever. The shore we should look for is that of the New Earth. (Heaven – Alcorn p. xx)

Consider how the following passages give us comfort for proceeding through life:

* + 1. **Romans 10:17 ESV:** *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*
       1. “It is God’s will that His Word should be heard and that a person’s ears should not be closed (Psalm 95:8). (TLSB)
       2. With this Word the Holy Spirit is present and opens hearts, so that people (like Lydia in Acts 16:14) pay attention to it and are converted only through the Holy Spirit’s grace and power, who alone does the work of converting a person” (FC Ep II 5). (TLSB)
       3. List some ways we can do this “hearing”?
    2. **John 10:27-28 ESV: *27****My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.****28****I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*
       1. A uniqueness of this Shepherd is that he not only lays down his life for the sheep but also gives life to his sheep out of grace. To perish is more than temporal death. It is eternal. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)
       2. No enemy can snatch us from the Shepherd’s grasp, but we ourselves can turn from him and reject his gift of grace. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)
    3. **Hebrews 12:1 ESV:** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*
       1. Like a massive cloud those OT heroes of faith surround the readers, giving vivid example of the endurance and eventual triumph of faith. “Don’t give up!” those heroes would shout from the pages of Holy Scripture, “Keep on running? You’re on the right track!” (PBC)
       2. The first three words of this verse range us along side of the OT believers mentioned in chapter 11. Even the believers in the OT are a countless host. They are witnesses in the sense that they are examples to us of faith and endurance. They surround us. God has placed them all about us in our thinking to encourage us. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)
       3. How can this become helpful to us?
       4. Comments or questions?
    4. **Isaiah 42:3 ESV:** *a bruised reed he will not break,   and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;    he will faithfully bring forth justice.*
       1. A “bruised reed” is *s*omeone who is weak. The servant will mend broken lives. (CSB)
       2. Wherever He finds men wounded and bruised by the harshness of life’s experience, or wherever He finds wounded and bruised consciences, whether among the Gentiles or in Israel, there He is most tender and delicate in the gentle handling of these souls. (Leupold)
       3. Wicks were made from broken flax fibers that could not be woven properly. Though of little value, these items are still handled carefully by the Servant. Cf. 40:29; 61:1-3. (CSB)
       4. Not only will He not destroy the life that is dying out, but He will actually save it. His course is not to destroy, but to save. (KD)
       5. What comfort do you find in this brief section?
       6. Comments or questions?
    5. **2 Peter 3:9 ESV:** *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*
       1. Repentance leading to faith and salvation is the issue for the Lord, not times or timing. He is patient, wanting all to come to salvation. Repentance consists of contrition (godly sorrow over one’s sins) and faith (trusting in the divine promise of forgiveness through faith in Christ). “God, who has called us, is faithful. So when He has begun the good work in us, He will also preserve it to the end and perfect it, if we ourselves do not turn from Him, but firmly hold on to the work begun to the end. He has promised His grace for this very purpose” (FC SD XI 32). (TLSB)
       2. Lenski: The 'some' are not the mockers, who claim that all this talk about the End Times is nothing; these are some of the Christians who will be disturbed by these coming mockers. . . . 'Some' get uneasy and think that perhaps the mockers are right in claiming that there is nothing to this whole promise of Christ's return. (Buls)
    6. **Romans 8:35-39 ESV: *35****Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?* ***36****As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”****37****No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.****38****For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,****39****nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
       1. Paul wanted to show his readers that suffering does not separate believers from Christ but actually carries them along toward their ultimate goal. (CSB)
       2. Paul lists seven things that threaten to come between us and Christ’s love—all of which Paul himself experienced. Cf 2Co 11:16–33. (TLSB)
       3. In verse 36 Paul quotes Ps 44:22 to show that the suffering of believers is no accident; the faithful in the OT likewise were persecuted because of their God. Since suffering is prophesied by Scripture, Paul’s readers are assured that God is in control. Their suffering does not mean that they are separated from the love of God, since throughout history suffering has been the common experience of believers who have received God’s love. Tribulations, far from contradicting God’s love, may paradoxically be signs of God’s care. Modern dangers that Christians face include pressure, scorn, and ridicule from a society whose lifestyle contrasts so definitely with Christian commitment. There are also dangers common to believers and unbelievers alike, such as hunger, lack of shelter, natural disasters, tragedies, and violence. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)
       4. When this text ends with the words “*nor anything else in all creation,”* it includes all created things. Only God is not included, and He is the one who has justified us (v. 33). (CSB)
    7. **1 Corinthians 15:54-57 ESV: *4****When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”* ***55****“O death, where is your victory?     O death, where is your sting?”* ***56****The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.****57****But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
       1. Chrysostom, the great fifth-century preacher put it this way: “Seest thou his noble soul? How even as one who is offering sacrifices for victory, having become inspired and seeing already things future as thins past, he leaps and tramples upon death fallen at his feet, and shouts a cry of triumph over its head where it lies, exclaiming mightily and saying, ‘Oh death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’ It is clean gone, it is perished, it is utterly vanished away, and in vain hast thou done all those former things. For He not only disarmed death and vanquished it, but even destroyed it, and made it quite cease from being.” (Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoelke – pp. 80-81)
       2. Christians live within the confession of this truth: we have conquered death! That victory of Christ shapes our living in this life. We can face death and walk through the valley of death with confidence because death has no sting. We can also enter into our ongoing dying in this life and the moment of our death as an act of bold confession, trust, and hope because this life has no permanency but the life to come does. We can die to this life because we will live in Christ. As Paul says in **Romans 14:8-9,** *If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. For this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.* Christ lives eternally and so shall we. His resurrection victory is our resurrection victory! (Death, Heaven, Resurrection and the New Creation – Burreson & Hoelke – p. 81)
    8. **Hebrews 12:2 ESV:** *looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*
       1. Just as a runner concentrates on the finish line, we should concentrate on Jesus, the goal and objective of our faith. (CSB)
       2. The author uses the present tense in the Greek to remind us to keep fixing our eyes on Jesus. (PBC)
  1. Being in the Word of God by hearing, reading and studying it, receiving His Sacraments and gathering where God’s people join us will help us focus on Jesus will have us ready for the Last Day.
  2. What are some means available to us?
  3. Develop a pattern of living that have you using God’s gifts to you.
  4. Comments or questions?