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## Heaven on Earth – Communion Meditation/2017

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Today we continue our series on heaven.

I think heaven is something that all Christians need to know more about. (and we are following his book HEAVEN as a guide to this series – **picture of book**)

Randy Alcorn puts it this way...

*Imagine you're part of a NASA team preparing for a five-year mission to Mars. (Image of Mars) After a period of extensive training, the launch date finally arrives.*

*As the rocket lifts off, one of your fellow astronauts asks, "What do you know about Mars?"*

*Envision shrugging your shoulders and saying, "Nothing. We never talked about it. I guess we'll find out when we get there."*

And Randy says....It's unthinkable, isn't it? It's inconceivable that your training wouldn't have included extensive study of and preparation for your ultimate destination. Randy states that even in seminaries, Bible schools, and churches around the world, there's very little teaching about our ultimate destination: the New Heaven and the New Earth.

We're told how to *get* to heaven, and that it's a better destination than hell, but we're taught remarkably little about Heaven itself.

Some of you had questions you emailed to me and I am waiting one more week to give those of you who haven't written yet a chance...but next Sundays message will attempt to answer these questions as follows:

***Do animals go to heaven?***

***Do babies who die go to heaven?***

***Do we retain our individuality in heaven?***

***What about suicide?*** That's for next week...

Now last week, we talked about some of the characteristics of heaven that we know from the Bible, and if you missed it please go online and listen to the podcasts.

If you want a hard copy of the sermon I gave last time about heaven, I have that as well.

Today, we are talking about heaven on earth...and what that means...

One of the unique things about Randy's book and why it was recommended to me by Zee, and Todd and others of you who read it, is the very compelling notion – backed by the scripture – that one day heaven will actually be here...on earth.

Randy's well thought through theology on this is that God does not start something he doesn't finish well – and the ultimate plan of God is to restore the earth to its original form before the fall...before sin entered it...in essence...fulfill the earth...bringing heaven (or God's realm) here!

I don't know if you are like me, but I can't stand to not finish a project. Maybe you are like that too.

I remember when Julie our daughter was young Tim and I started to build a dollhouse from one of those kits that was precut and you had to glue it all together – and follow these directions that were written in a tiny little font lightly printed - we got it from some specialty toy store and it was very elaborate.

Still the picture on the box made it look really easy to assemble – you know one of those -, I think it said something like “assemble in a day in 10 easy steps” - but when you got down to it, it was extremely difficult.

The dollhouse was supposed to be a Christmas present for her and we had it in a room that was off limits, and it took days and days - just seeing the pieces lying around, day after day,

And then trying to assemble them together, and finding that they did not fit together correctly, sort of lopsided at first...having it partially painted cause the kit didn't give enough paint , all this imperfection, drove me bananas.

On the night before Christmas, Tim and I stayed up as parent will do - finishing the thing...but we never installed the electronic doorbell...just could not figure that one out. I was so relieved to have it completed and of course she was thrilled.

If you're anything like me, you want to finish well, what you started.

So in the same way, **God wants to finish well...what he started.**

Our understanding from scripture is that God created the world as a beautiful sinless place where humanity could be in relationship with their Creator – it says in scripture that God walked with Adam & Eve in the cool of the evening.

Just think about that...

A sense of intimacy and closeness with God abounds in that simple statement doesn't it?

Wouldn't you like to take a walk with God in the cool of the evening? Be with the Lord and just "shoot the breeze". That's where the old hymn "I Come to the Garden Alone" with the chorus "he walks with me, and he talks with me" comes from.

The meaning of 'adam in Hebrew, actually means "humanity" – not just one guy as we have been led to believe. So this connectivity and beauty that is then marred as 'Adam or humanity decides to move away from God.

As this happens creation "falls" and things get ugly. Kind of like the dollhouse we were trying to assemble that was lopsided for awhile, off-kilter – doesn't look like the picture on the box – even though it is still a foretaste of how it would look eventually – I - but kind of getting messed up in the process of getting there.

In the same way again and again in scripture – and most specifically in the scripture Paul read to you earlier, we read that one day there will be **A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH**...and also the scripture Paul read to you about **creation groaning, waiting for its ultimate fulfillment** - it is quite clear that God's goal, in the marathon of human history is that heaven will one day be here – on earth.

Creation, as beautiful as it is now, (and I know many you find God in nature) *only hints at its original glory*. That's hard to believe when you look at the ocean, or walk through a forest of redwoods. This is just a hint – these things that just blow us away with their grandeur and beauty – are just hints of their original glory. And people, as amazing as they are now, are only hints of the glorious beings they were created to be.

We are living in a fallen world. Under a curse of our own making. But one day... scripture tells us...

All that has gone wrong between us and God – all the darkness that marred this world - will be restored to its original intended glory. What God has started here, on earth, that went sour – he, God, will finish it well – and there will be no more crying, or pain, or suffering, or injustice anymore.

God's not going to abandon this project called earth, his creation, that he started.

There are so many scriptures that promise this. Do a Bible study sometime and look this up...more than I can go over here.

So once you understand this Biblical concept that heaven will be established on earth one day, that heaven and earth will be united in resurrection ( a sort of coming back to life ), you can understand then what Alcorn says when he writes the following:

**The exact location of the present heaven is unknown, but we're told the future heaven will be located on a new earth, where God will come down to live with his people ([Revelation 21:3](#)). The present heaven is a place of transition between believers' past lives on earth and future resurrection lives on the New Earth.**

*So Alcorn actually explains the current place where people go when they die as a stopover on an airplane.*

*For instance our family always go to Hawaii on Christmas – its much cheaper to fly on Christmas day, by the way, if your are interested in coming with us - and I was looking at the flights and the most economical way to go this year is to fly to LAX first on the way to the islands.*

*Now, LAX, is not our final destination. It is a stop on the way to the ultimate destination. Now we are in vacation mode when we get to LAX and we usually grab a bite and have a great time together as the stress of life begins to roll off of us. And in the same way Alcorn says...*

Life in the heaven we go to when we die now is “far better” than living here on earth under the curse, away from the direct presence of God (**Philippians 1:23**). But although it will be a wonderful place, the present heaven is not the final destination that God promises to us, where we will live forever. God’s children are destined for life as resurrected beings on a resurrected earth.

[Revelation 21:1](#) says, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared.”

Once we abandon our assumption that heaven cannot change, it all makes sense. God doesn’t change. But God clearly says that Heaven will change. It will eventually be relocated to the New Earth.

[Ephesians 1:10](#) says that God’s plan is “to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”

*Just as God and human beings will be forever united in Jesus, so heaven and earth will forever be united in the new physical universe, where we’ll live as resurrected people.*

God will live with us on the New Earth. That will bring all things in Heaven and on Earth together. “**And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with people. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God’”** (**Revelation 21:3**).

To be in resurrected bodies on a resurrected earth in resurrected friendships, enjoying a resurrected culture with the resurrected Jesus—now ***That* will be the ultimate party! (picture of balloons)**

Everybody will be who God intended them to be—and none of us will ever suffer or die again. And the project begun long ago called Creation will be finished... and finished well!

Now, whether you know it or not, you’ve been praying for this thing to happen every Sunday that you have prayed the Lord’s Prayer.

You have said, probably without thinking about it too much, “**Thy kingdom come...(to earth)...thy will be done...on earth as it is in heaven.**”

Even Jesus put this in his prayer – when asked by his disciples how do we pray – Jesus asked us to also yearn and pray for God’s fulfillment - to hasten the day when heaven will come to earth and both realms will be united.

So how does learning about this concept of heaven coming to earth affect us now...

Peter writes this... After saying “**we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness,**” Peter immediately adds, “**So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him**” ([2 Pet. 3:13-14](#)).

In other words, get practical, get real; this life matters.

Knowing we’ll live forever as resurrected people on a New Earth helps us realize that the choices we make today, including choices of personal holiness—and how we act toward others—will make an indelible mark on eternity.

God cares about this planet earth! Jesus died for it. What you do to bring his justice and mercy here...now...is a foretaste of heaven and it will last for all eternity.

God is watching. He’s keeping track. Jesus said that in heaven he’ll reward us for acts of faithfulness to Him, right down to every cup of cold water we’ve given to the needy in His name ( [Mark 9:41](#)).

***Life on earth matters, not because it’s the only life we have, but precisely because it isn’t—it’s the beginning of a life that will continue without end on a renewed earth.***

Whether it’s feeding the homeless at City Team, fixing up a yard for Teen Challenge, helping with OCC or Adopt A Chaplain, reaching out at the Fall Festival, singing your heart out in praise in the choir, going on short-term missions trips like RSM, - you’re bringing a foretaste of the coming New Earth to this current, hurting Earth.

**Remember! We’re citizens of two realms, which will one day be consolidated into one—a new heaven and a new earth, indivisible and under the eternal rule of Christ.**

That means folks....**The best is yet to come! No need for bucket lists!**

Why? Because, the adventures awaiting us on the New Earth will far exceed the greatest thrills of this life. ***Right when we think “it can’t get any better than this”...it will!***

*(Transition to Table)*

As we move into communion today, (**communion slide**) Jesus calls us to take his body and his blood, through the elements of bread and juice as a symbol of the forgiveness of our sins and our reconciliation with God.

But this table is also a foretaste of the heavenly banquet that we will all joyfully participate in, when all this is accomplished.

Sometimes this heavenly banquet is called in the Bible the “**The Marriage Supper of the Lamb**” meaning that the great divorce that happened at the fall, when creation separated itself from God, will be healed in that new earth

Humanity and God will be forever reunited; God will be with us, walking with us again in the cool of the day, and Christ will be all in all.

Let us pray....