

Children's Moment

January 25, 2015

Title: Apostles' Teaching

Theme: Life of the Church

Object:

Scripture: [“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”](#) (Acts 2:42)

We come together as a church to hear what Jesus and His apostles taught. We find the teachings of Jesus and His apostles in the Bible. Do your dad and mom read to you stories from the Bible? What is your favorite story? Out of the Old Testament I thought of the common ones like Noah and the flood, the exodus, parting of the Red Sea, the lives of King David and Samuel. Out of the New Testament we have stories of Jesus turning water into wine, healing all sorts of people, raising people from the dead – not just Lazarus, feeding the 5000+ and then feeding 4000+ and Jesus walking on water. What about the story of Jesus catching the fish with a coin in its mouth?

Do you know the story of Jesus cursing the Fig Tree? How about how he healed the ear cut off by Peter? Of course there is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead that is important because it is solid proof that the Bible is true. Do you know the story of Jesus ascension from earth to heaven? There are great stories of Paul, Peter and John.

All of these stories are interesting and teach us about God and how to live as Christians. This is what the pastor does on Sunday mornings – he teaches the apostle’s teachings from the Bible to help us learn to be better Christians.

This is why it is important for you to sit quietly and listen so you can also learn what the Bible teaches. You will also be able to ask your parents really good questions and find out if they listened to the teaching.

We want to do all the things the early church did and learn from the apostles' teaching, fellowship with each other and break bread – both when we have communion and meals like the one we will have after church today. Let's not forget about prayer – prayer is a very important part of a Christian's life.

Let's pray together - for I know God is listening and loves to hear from His children.

-S- Heaven

Have you ever been anxious about heaven? Do you wonder if you will recognize family and friends when you get to heaven? I have not doubted that I will go to heaven when I die and I will be eternally home in the presence of God. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, ⁶“Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight— ⁸we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:6-8) We know we do not belong here to this earth and are just sojourners. But, I want you to know that the Word of God is clear about the fact that we will know each other. Lets explore heaven this morning in light the first four verses of John 14, “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also. ⁴And you know the way where I am going.”

Heaven and Jesus

As we begin to delve into heaven the first point is not will we recognize each other, but will we recognize Jesus? We begin with Jesus because if we know Jesus then heaven is truly spiritual and a godly reunion and this is first and foremost what heaven is about - God. In The ACTS of the Apostles we read, as they were getting ready to stone and kill Stephen, he speaks, “Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” (Acts 7:56) Christ revealed

Himself to Stephen and he recognized Jesus. Stephen was able to die in full faith and the peace that he was to soon see Jesus and would be able to express to Jesus the praise and love Jesus deserves. What makes heaven truly heaven is God and experiencing Him forever. Jesus is and always will be our first priority, our first love and the reality of heaven. This is what Jesus meant when He said to His disciples, ²“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there you may be also.*” At the moment Stephen was preparing to die he understood what Jesus meant when said this to the disciples the night He was arrested. Jesus had prepared for Stephen and Stephen was coming home – to his true home - heaven.

Heaven and Us

At this point we understand we will recognize Jesus, know Jesus and experience Him directly in heaven. I am often asked, “will we recognize each other?” After all we will be changed – we will have glorified bodies, not earthly ones. While on earth Jesus had **not** been glorified as yet and He gathered His disciples, and after the Lord’s Supper, and after Judas had left Jesus told them, “*Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.*” (John 13:31-32) Jesus was then arrested, crucified and rose from the dead. When Jesus rose from the dead He was recognized by the eleven, and by over 500 people. Stephen recognized Him. Then will this not be true for us as well? We will recognize Jesus, those we have known on earth and more. Let me return to the beginning, in Genesis we read, “*Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people.*” (Genesis 25:8) When Abraham died he was not

buried in Ur of the Chaldeans the place of his earthly ancestors. We just read that Abraham was “gathered to his people” in verse 8 but he was not buried until verse 9. Being “gathered to his people” then refers to his death not his burial. Abraham was “gathered to his people” the new people of God and those who have gone before him. This then is consistent with the phrase “gathered to his people” being used 9 times to describe Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Aaron being taken home to heaven to be with God and the believers who had gone before them.

King David had a child by Bathsheba in a manner not honoring to God. God struck the child and it became sick and died. While the child was sick David knew he was to blame and he fasted and prayed. So great was David’s sorrow for his sin that when the child died his servants were afraid to tell him. David perceived a change in their demeanor and asked, “Is the child dead?” David surprised everyone by rising from his place of mourning and he washed, dressed, ate and resumed his duties as king. When the servants asked David about his sudden change from mourning to normal life, David explained, “While the child was *still* alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, ‘Who knows, the LORD may be gracious to me, that the child may live.’ But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? Notice what David says now, “I will go to him, but he will not return to me.” (2 Samuel 12:22-23) David is not just saying at some point he will die and go to heaven. But, David believed that he would see his son and know him when he also arrived in heaven.

Let’s fast-forward a thousand years to Jesus’ transfiguration. Jesus took three of his disciples; Peter, James and John the author of our study passage this morning with Him. Jesus is transfigured to His celestial glory and Moses and Elijah appear beside Him. Luke describes them as men and Peter and the others recognize them

as Moses and Elijah. So Moses and Elijah who were glorified and were in heaven with God remained recognizable to the disciples.

Jesus spoke to the centurion concerning his faith and makes clear that believing Jews and gentiles will journey to heaven and unbelievers to hell and there they will recognize each other. Jesus said, **“I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”** Believers will come together in heaven as family and fellowship. They will first and foremost enjoy God and then enjoy each other. However, the unsaved - **“But the sons of the kingdom (*the unbelieving children from the chosen nation of Israel and expanded to mean all unbelievers*) will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”**

(Matthew 8:11-12) Through this verse and others we understand unbelievers will also recognize each other in their torment.

When we arrive in heaven to be in eternal fellowship with God we will recognize the patriarchs and each other. We will experience a reunion with all those believers we have so dearly loved here on earth. I will see those in my family who have gone before me, including my grandson Christopher. I will see those who I have deeply loved from working in many countries. I may not see them again here on this earth, but I will see them again in heaven. I will be surprised to see some people I was not sure about and was not sure if they would be in heaven. And sadly, I will be just as surprised not to find some that I thought would be there. Jesus tells us, **¹“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me ... ⁴And you know the way where I am going.”** (John 14:1 & 4) If we believe in Jesus - we know the way to heaven – as scriptures say we are people of the Way – the Way of Jesus. The road to heaven is paved by faith in Christ.

Heaven As It Is

So far we have seen that heaven is first about Jesus and then secondly that we will recognize each other. Now I want to make a third point; we shall see each other, not as we are now or have been, but as we are meant to be. John made this clear in his first letter, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.” (1 John 3:2)

As I have read the bible through and read this verse I focused on the word “we” and read this verse as if it said “I.” So I read it that Bill, me, will be like Jesus and I took comfort that I would be transfigured to be like Jesus. Not perfect in the sense of Christ – for God is the only truly perfect being. But, I will receive my glorified body and live in God’s perfection. As I studied for this Lord’s Day message I sat back and was impressed by another thought – it is not just I (aren’t we all a little ego centric?) but we ALL will be like Jesus. That means in heaven; unlike this earth – sin, ignorance, anger, hate, dishonesty, perversity that so mars our relationships now – will be eliminated. In heaven we will have a fresh view of each other – we will see each other, not as we know each other here on earth, in our sin – but rather we will know each other as God meant us to be.

In addition we will see each other rewarded for faithful service in this life and there will be no jealousy - we will rejoice. Paul explained to Timothy, “In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:8) James the brother of Jesus told the Jerusalem church, “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to

those who love Him.” (James 1:12) One does not believe or serve God with their chief purpose or goal being the rewards God graciously gives – if that were so that would make a person a hired servant nor a child of inheritance. A right way to look at rewards, as the example of the patriarchs gave us, is by faith. Many of those we read about in the Bible had much to be discouraged about often they experienced trails, hardships, beatings and ridicule. But they remained faithful and endured because they looked forward to their reward. Moses life was marked by faith. First, by his parents who hid him and then they had faith and placed him in the Nile. The writer of Hebrews in chapter 11 writes of this in detail and says in verse 26 that Moses “considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.” Moses had faith in the Lord and was His servant and served God’s people. Moses and our great reward is heaven is being with Christ. Living in the presence of God without sin. The icing on the cake will be living with family and friends also without sin – as we were meant to be.

Heaven Now

If the greatest reward is heaven and what makes heaven the greatest reward is Christ then truly I long for heaven for I long to be with Christ. If Christ is what makes heaven special – then what about heaven now? Peter spoke to the followers of Christ and those seeking saying, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:37) God’s gift to sinners is Christ by which we receive salvation and are reconciled back to God the Father. Christ, God the Son’s gift to those God has called is the Holy Spirit by which we are able to live in faith. Because of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling our soul then we are living in the presence

of God and I argue that this enables to begin to experience heaven on earth and prepare us to live in the presence of God eternally.

We can begin to live for heaven now. Paul wrote that he and those serving in ministry with him, “rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong; this we also pray for, that you be made complete.” (2 Corinthians 13:9) Paul told believers “rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.” (2 Corinthians 13:11) This is how the church is to live as not only a witness to the lost world, but because living in harmony and peace with each other is a blessing and is a foreshadow of heaven. We are to love each other so deeply and we are to be so concerned with what is best for others that when we see each other we “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (2 Corinthians 13:12)

The choice to live both in the present and the future heaven is before us. Jesus said to each one of us and to all of us, “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.” (John 14:1-4) Jesus is preparing our hearts and souls right now as we breathe and He is preparing heaven for our arrival. I implore each of us to live heaven now through the power of the Holy Spirit given to each believer by the grace of God. As Paul told the believers from long ago the goal is to “rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.” (2 Corinthians 13:11) Now my beloved brothers and sisters as we prepare for a time of fellowship, food and seeking solutions to make Canyon Bible

a holy church community before our holy God, let us fulfill the scriptures and let us live heaven on earth in the presence of God. May our time this morning be filled by “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)