

**THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE**  
**Series: "Christ in the School of Prayer"**  
**Easter Sunday –March 27, 2016 –John 17: 1-11 & 20-26**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

So is heaven a place with fluffy white clouds, and we have to wear white robes and angel wings, and we float around playing a harp? I mean, I don't even look good in white. And some folks don't like harp music. So why would someone want to go to heaven? And float around and listen to harp music and for all eternity? That's not eternal life. Jesus says this: *"And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."* (John 17: 3) No, no –THIS is eternal life...

I think the best way to try to explain eternal life is to take the best experience we've ever had in this life and to recreate that feeling in our heart and mind and soul. We reconsider that most wonderful of all moments and recapture it again in our heart. Think about it for a moment; get it fixed in your mind before I proceed. And then we magnify it by a factor of eternity. We multiply it exponentially to the power of infinity. We consider it expanding in our soul, relentlessly, geometrically, expanding and expanding, never contracting, never going away, just getting bigger and stronger and more powerfully alive, every moment better than the one before, every feeling so full as to burst the human heart, powerfully, wonderfully more and more alive, more and more filled with joy and love and hope. No matter how much you have, you get more. No matter how much you have you want more and more and more. And there is no limit to that joy. It raptures the human heart farther and farther up into the deep and infinite recesses of the heart of God. To know the height and the breadth and the depth and the love of God which passeth knowledge. To know God and to know His only begotten Son, Jesus is Christ, is what heaven is like. This, **THIS is eternal life...**

The experience of heaven, I think it is like falling in love. It is desperately wanting to be in the presence of the beloved. However much time one spends with the object of one's affection, you want to spend more. You are sad when away from them. You are thinking about them constantly. When you are with them you are fully 100% present to them. When you are away from them you are constantly thinking about them. They are your first waking thought in the morning. They are the last waking thought when you fall asleep at night. There is a unity between the one who loves and the beloved. *"I have come that they might have life and life abundantly"* promises Jesus. (John 10:10) Life and life to the infinite power. Life and life and more life. Life abundant in this life and life eternal and abundant in the next life. Jesus has fallen in love with us and we are to fall in love with HIM. Powerful, passionate, growing exponentially; powerfully full and alive; geometrically propelling us into the arms of the loving Father, rapturing us up into the depth of the heart of God's love for us. This, **THIS is eternal life...**

But why, why if you don't even want to spend one hour a week in the presence of the beloved...why, why would we ever want to spend all eternity with HIM????????? This is eternal life...that we know God as the One True God, and Jesus Christ whom God sent.

Now I have to tell you, in the title of several books, that indeed HEAVEN IS FOR REAL. But it isn't just set at some time in the future. It isn't pie in the sky, bye and bye. It isn't, first we live life and then we die and then we experience heaven. That is NOT eternal life. No, no, heaven is for real and it is for real in the here and now. It is all around us today. Jesus escaped from the tomb on that first Easter to be present, in, around and through us TODAY. Not only in that day when we die. But Jesus lives TODAY. He is present with us TODAY. The presence of the BELOVED is with us. We can experience the living presence of the living God Today in the present, right now. The 20 cent phrase is "realized eschatology".

Eschatology is the study of final things. *Realized* eschatology is when those final things come and live and dwell in the present, TODAY. Heaven is for real in that day when we die. Ah, but perhaps more importantly, heaven is for real TODAY, in the here and now, on this Easter Sunday, in this sanctuary. Jesus has escaped from the tomb of death to be with us, to sit with us, to come to us, to indwell us, to claim us for the love of God and to enter into our heart and life and demonstrate to us that heaven is for real, not just then, but NOW...And this is eternal life...to know God and to know Jesus Christ, to know Him and love Him and to understand we are His beloved in whom HE dwells...

But I have to say, if you don't experience it TODAY, if we don't experience HIM today, if we don't experience the inbreaking of the Kingdom of heaven into our midst TODAY, into our heart and life TODAY, then why would we expect that we would experience that in that day when we die? Experience eternal life TODAY...experience eternal life TOMORROW...experience eternal life FOREVER! **THIS, THIS is eternal life...**

Was the stone rolled away from the garden tomb that held the lifeless body of Jesus for Jesus to escape? Or for us, as disciples, to go in and see that He is risen from the dead, just as He said? Yes. Both/ And. The stone, cold tomb of death could not contain Him, and the power of the resurrection came and rolled the stone away. The power to the nth power that we can experience in this life and in the life to come, came and rolled the stone away. Jesus escaped in order to come here today. Just for you. Just for me. The beloved has come; the One who loves our soul is present; the One whom to know is life eternal and life abundant has come to us TODAY. Active. Realized. Present. Thy kingdom has come. Alive forevermore. And we have the power TODAY to enter into that stone hewn tomb and to see eternity held for us and a love which loves us today, and tomorrow, and forever. A love that will never let us go. A love that will never die... But why do we not experience this eternal life today? What is keeping us from entering into this eternal life today? Realizing the Kingdom of heaven present in our life TODAY? Life has hardened our heart. The sadnesses and the losses have cast a concrete shell around our heart. The disappointments and unanswered prayers. The debilitating diseases. The unanswerable questions and ponderings. Life has intruded and life has rolled a twenty five ton, impossibly heavy stone over the doorway to our human heart. And so all this talk of heaven seems unreal. Impossible. O, we want to experience this feeling of eternity today. We want to be freed from the stone cold tomb of death, of finitude, of a lack of the experience of the eternal. But we cannot free ourselves. We cannot do it on our own. Our heart is too heavy. The stone of life seems impossible to move. Who can roll this stone away? We cannot enter into the very heart of God and experience that life, new life, abundant life and eternal life that HE has for us TODAY. OR so we think...

But what we cannot do, God can do. Our entire series has been on finding "Christ in the School of Prayer". So Jesus prays this final great "high priestly prayer" recorded in the Gospel of John. And He prays, "*that they (us) may be one, even as we (Jesus and God) are one.*" (John 17: 11) And HE prays, "*That they all may be one, ; even as Thou Father, art in me, and I in Thee...*" (John 17: 21) Here is the secret of eternal life. Here is the reason God sent Jesus. Here is the meaning of His birth and His life and His death and His resurrection. ---The spiritual unity of Christ and the believer; the Holy Spirit coming and indwelling the human heart and bringing Jesus Christ alive within; the ONE-ness of God and Jesus and us. This spiritual reality—why Jesus escaped from the tomb and has come to be present with us TODAY—this union of Christ and our heart—THIS, THIS, THIS is eternal life...HE IS RISEN. The question is: IS he risen IN US and in OUR HEART today? This is eternal life. Amen & Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, Pennsylvania  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*