

Paradise • Easter Message 2000

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Hawaii*

1. If you've ever been to Hawaii, you know what I mean when I say that it's absolutely gorgeous
2. Several years ago my wife and I had an opportunity to go to Hawaii.
3. Now, at the time, I really wasn't all that thrilled about going
 - a. I figured it was just a big tourist trap
 - b. that we'd get there, the weather would be bad -
 - c. the food would be lousy and it would just be one big, noisy bore
4. Lynn, my wife, really wanted to go. She was born in Honolulu but had left the islands when she was still just a baby and it was a life-long dream of hers to go back and see it as an adult
5. There was no way we could go on our own – we just couldn't afford it, but when some close friends said they wanted to take us, I relented and agreed it would at least be good to get away for awhile.
6. The minute we touched down on Maui, my attitude did a 180!
 - a. the beauty was stunning!
 - b. the scent of flowers in the tropical air was incredible
 - c. the temperature was perfect; not too hot or cool, it was just right!
 - d. the sunlight even seemed to different; all the colors seemed more vibrant and alive
7. It was on Hawaii that I learned how to relax, how to take a break and rest.
8. After just 3 days, I felt like a new man; the stress and pressure I had been under just melted way
9. Several days later, when it came time to board the plane to go home, every step was reluctant. I didn't want to leave.

B. *Paradise*

1. Now I know why so many people call Hawaii and the tropical islands of the Pacific, *Paradise!*
2. I want to talk to you today about Paradise
3. Traditionally on Easter we take a look at the Resurrection of Jesus Christ
4. And we're going to do that today – but from a bit of a different angle
5. Today, we're going to take a look at the Paradise that is Heaven, but what we're going to consider is what *we'll be like* when we get there
6. We're going to see what the Bible says about *our* resurrection

II. TEXT

A. *1 Corinthians 15 [Turn there]*

1. The Apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the church at Corinth to answer a number of questions they had asked him

2. One of them had to do with the *nature of the resurrection*
 3. There was some confusion over exactly *what* gets raised
 - a. is it *this* body that is raised
 - b. or do we get a *completely different* body?
 4. Paul's answer in 1 Corinthians 15 is one of the most comprehensive passages in the bible on the resurrection the followers of Christ will experience
 5. He writes . . .
- 35 But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?"**
- 36 Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies.**
6. Paul answers the question so *harshly* because he knows it isn't being asked *sincerely*.
 - a. the people who had asked this didn't really want an answer;
 - b. they thought there *was no answer* to this question and so it showed the foolishness of believing in a resurrection,
 - c. they asked it like this, [sneer, mocking] "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?"
 - d. Paul turns the tables on them and says *they* are the foolish ones for *denying* the resurrection
 - e. then he goes on to answer their mocking question with a real answer . . .
- 36 . . . what you sow is not made alive unless it dies.**
- 37 And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other *grain*.**
- 38 But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.**
7. Paul uses seeds and the plants that grow from them as an example of the resurrection.
 - a. if you take a look at the seed for a eucalyptus tree, there's no way you could guess that that tree comes from such a small thing yet that is precisely what happens
 - b. the seed goes in to the ground, and as moisture pierces the shell of the seed, and the soil warms to just the right temperature, a tiny shoot breaks out of the seed and starts to inch it's way toward the surface
 - c. at the same time, another shoot launches out and presses downward, sending out tiny filaments to gather in more moisture and nutrients from the soil
 - d. eventually, the upper shoot bursts forth into the light, and then the plant really takes off
 - e. the seed, which started it all, is consumed as the plant matures, till eventually, no evidence of the seed remains – just the full grown plant
 8. That is what our resurrection will be like
 - a. this seed, this body, will go into the ground
 - b. and on that Day when Christ comes, His power and life will cause this seed to be changed
 - c. in a process that takes but an instant, something new will rise,

- d. and this body will be consumed or changed into something different, and yet similar
- 9. That is Paul's point by using the seed analogy
 - a. a daisy seed always produces daisies
 - b. a eucalyptus seed will always give rise to a eucalyptus tree
 - c. an avocado seed will spring forth into an avocado tree – always!
 - d. daisy seeds don't give rise to dandelions – they spring up into daisies!
- 10. In the same way, our resurrected bodies will be *human* bodies
 - a. we aren't going to become something totally different after death
 - b. we will still be humans – it's just that our bodies will be *changed*
 - c. not only will we be humans, but we will be *unique individuals*
 - d. you will be you and I will be I and every person sitting around you will be themselves
 - e. we do not all merge into some kind of *collective cosmic consciousness* after death
 - f. Paul makes this clear in the next verses . . .

39 **All flesh is not the same flesh, but *there is one kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, *and* another of birds.**

40 ***There are* also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another.**

41 ***There is* one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for *one* star differs from *another* star in glory.**

42 **So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.**

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. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.**

11. When I read this, I get really excited

12. And may I say, the older I get, the more excited I get.

13. When Paul says that the body is sown in corruption, he's speaking of the frailty and fragility of human life

- a. we get sick, things wear out

- b. when you're 18 or 19, or 23, you kind of shrug your shoulders and say, "I suppose so."

- c. but when you turn 40, 45, 55, 65, you say, "Uh-huh!"

14. I'm a lot more in tune with Paul than I used to be when he says, "The body is sown in corruption and weakness."

15. But what gets me excited is what follows:

***The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.**

It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory.

It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

16. The corruptibility, and dishonor, and weakness is something I am familiar with
 17. What I *yearn* for is the incorruption, the glory, and the power.
 18. I ache, literally, for the day when this natural body becomes *supernatural*
 - a. no more bulging middle or balding top
 - b. no more varicose veins or crow's feet
 - c. no more cellulite or support hose
 - d. the end of thunder thighs and highway hips
 19. No more wheel chairs or dialysis
 20. No more mechanical lungs or life support systems
 21. No more chemotherapy or bone marrow replacement
 22. No more insulin – no more Tylenol, Aspirin, or even ibuprofen!
 23. The resurrection will put you in the body God always intended for you
 - a. it will never, ever be troubled by age or wracked by pain
 - b. it will never break or wear out
 - c. on the contrary, it will be the perfect vehicle for you to enjoy all the glory and splendor of heaven!
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24. I love to backpack in the Sierra – Every new pass you cross and valley you enter presents new vistas of beauty that are beyond description
 25. When I was in high school, hiking with a 70 lb. backpack at 10,000 feet was hard, but I was able to do it
 26. Today, I don't think I could hike very far with *half* that much weight, specially at those altitudes
 27. I want to be able to scale Mt. Whitney – but in the condition I'm in right now – there's no way I could
 28. I would need to get in shape first – and that would take weeks
 29. Listen friend – Heaven is the Perfection of beauty and wonder
 - a. every time you turn around there is some new sight that will present itself to you that will blow you away
 - b. and you will have the perfect vehicle, the perfect body for going any place you wish
 - c. you won't have to get in shape – you'll already be there!

B. The Uniqueness of Christianity

1. Christianity is the only religion that says that you become greater after you die than you were before
2. The *materialist* says that when you die, that's it, end of game – the body you leave behind just dissolves
3. Those religions that believe in *reincarnation* believe that souls continuously return after death to dress up in other bodies
4. *Hindus* believe that the body is merely an illusion, and eventually the soul will break the cycle of reincarnation to emerge into a massive, impersonal cosmic consciousness
5. The Bible is unique in that it teaches that these bodies we have now will be transformed into glorious new bodies that are perfectly equipped to enjoy all the glories of Heaven.

C. Paradise

1. I began today by talking about Hawaii, what so many people who have been there call “Paradise.”
2. Hawaii is indeed incredibly beautiful
 - a. and it isn’t just the *scenery* that’s so pretty – it’s the whole package
 - b. it’s the scent of tropical flowers in the air
 - c. it’s the hint of rain that is always there to freshen the skies
 - d. it’s the warmth of the ocean water that invites you in and caresses your body with a liquid massage
 - e. the colors of the sky and land are cleaner and more vibrant
 - f. the sun, as it breaks through the clouds, sends out a dozen spotlights to highlight some new scene of incredible beauty
 - g. simply put, it’s a *feast for the senses!*
3. But Hawaii is a ramshackle slum compared to Heaven
4. You and I will *need* new and different bodies to be able to enjoy all that Heaven has to offer
5. We’ll need new eyes to see because the glory of God will outshine the sun, and we can’t even look at that with *these* eyes!
6. In the Bible, when people were allowed a glimpse of heaven, they used the most precious objects on earth to describe what they saw
 - a. like *gold* – that’s what the *roads* of heaven are made of
 - b. and *precious stones*, that’s what the *foundations* of the heaven are constructed with
 - c. *pure crystal* is the *linoleum* we stand on
 - d. and *pearl* is what the *walls* are made of
7. People who saw what heaven is like had to use the most precious and valuable things of earth, to describe the *mundane building materials* of Heaven
8. We are certainly blessed to live where we do, here in Ventura County.
 - a. during the Summer we get those beautiful sunsets that light up the western horizon in gradients layers of yellow, then orange and purple and deep, deep blue.
 - b. I don’t know about you, but when I look out over the ocean into one of those sunsets, there is something inside me that wants to reach out to it and touch it!
 - c. there’s a deep stirring in my soul, a yearning to not just gaze at such beauty from a distance, but to enter it
 - d. maybe you’ve experienced that when listening to music or something as simple as a well arranged bouquet of flowers
 - e. it doesn’t matter what the source, the attraction is the same
 - f. you see, eternity beckons us – Heaven calls out to us
 - g. you and I were made for God – we were made to spend eternity with Him
 - h. Heaven is our real home and this life is like pre-school
9. The senses of your body, your sight, and hearing, and smell, and touch and taste, all of these are a part of what it means to be human
10. In Heaven, those senses will all find their ultimate and perfect fulfillment
 - a. what flavor is your absolute favorite?

- 1) white chocolate – strawberries – Outback’s Alice Springs Chicken with that dipping sauce?
- 2) whatever it is, it is like poi compared to what Heaven will provide in the way of taste
- b. what is your favorite sound?
 - 1) Mozart – Bach – Beethoven – Smetana – Andrew Lloyd Weber?
 - 2) whatever it is, it will sound like a 2 year old plunking on a toy piano compared to the music of Heaven
- c. what sight do you consider to be the most beautiful?
 - 1) there are some august and majestic scenes on this planet and even in space
 - 2) but every one of them is in one way or another marred by sin and broken by the Fall
 - 3) Heaven is untarnished by sin and evil – it is all whole and complete
11. These bodies we possess now are barely able to cope with life here; they obviously would never make it in Heaven
 - a. the light is too bright - the colors too intense
 - b. the air too pure - the food too flavorful
 - c. the reality and glory too heavy
12. So God is going to take this natural body, and draw forth from it in the resurrection, a *supernatural* body – one that is capable of enjoying all the pleasure and sensations of Heaven

D. Boring

1. Some people mock the idea of heaven
2. Just like there were mockers of the resurrection in Corinth, there are those today who mock heaven and say that if Heaven is perfect, then it will be perfectly *boring*
3. But like Paul, we can say that is foolish!
4. If heaven was boring, it wouldn’t be perfect!
5. Heaven can’t be boring because even in heaven we will still be human beings
 - a. and human beings, by their very nature, are finite
 - b. since God is infinite and we are finite, Heaven will be an eternity of always growing, always learning
 - c. *every* moment will be a delight and a surprise
 - d. no doubt some of the most common words of heaven will be, “Oo!” “Ah!” “Look!” “Wow!” “Check it out!”
6. Heaven, my friend, will be anything and everything but boring!

E. Problem

1. But there’s a problem –
2. While Heaven is Paradise, and the resurrection guarantees we will get bodies capable of enjoying all of it,
3. Not everyone is going to heaven
4. Jesus was very clear when he said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.”

5. Jesus is the way to Heaven – He is the key that unlocks the gate
6. You see, sin has erected a barrier between God and man
7. All the good works you've done in your entire life could never undo the sin you've committed
8. You know why? Because any good you can do, you're already required to do
9. The bible says that all have sinned and fall short of the standard God has set
10. The penalty for falling short is death, eternal separation from God
11. So apart from Christ, the destiny of all men and women is not heaven, but hell.
12. Despite our sin – God loves us and longs for us to spend eternity with Him
13. So He did for us what we *could not* do for ourselves
14. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for our sin on the Cross
15. When Jesus rose three days later, it was proof that His death fully satisfied the price for our sin
16. How you appropriate His work on your behalf is to *believe* that when He died on the Cross, He died for you, and that when He rose from the dead, that resurrection power was made available to fill you with His life!

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Gift*

1. When I began today, I told you of my trip to Hawaii several years ago
 2. I mentioned that Lynn and I could not have gone on our own because we couldn't afford it
 3. I guess we could have put on our swimming suits, donned masks and snorkels and fins and gone down to Silverstrand and tried to *swim* to Hawaii
 4. But we never would have made it - You can't *swim* to Hawaii
 5. It took the gracious gift of a good friend to make it possible for us to *fly* to Paradise
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6. In the same way – you can't *work* your way to Heaven
 7. The only way to heaven is to accept the *gift* of the God who wants to enter into an eternal personal, love relationship with you
 8. That gift is *salvation*, that gift is the hope and promise of Heaven, that gift is forgiveness of the debt of sin and the removal of the barrier that stands in the way between you and God
 9. That gift is *received* by putting your faith in Christ.
 10. Will you do that this morning?
 11. In just a moment we're going to pray and I'm going to ask if you want to know that you're going to heaven, get up out of your seat and come down here and speak to one of the many prayer counselors who will be waiting to talk and pray with you.

B. *Paradise Anyone?*

1. Today, if I made an offer and said, "Anyone who wants to go to Hawaii, absolutely free of charge, all you have to do is come up here and I'll give you a free airline ticket, rental car, hotel and meals – FREE!" I know probably all but a few would come forward to get one.

2. Listen – God is extending an even better offer – and infinitely better offer.
3. So let me ask - Who wants to go to Paradise – not for a two-week vacation, but for ever?”
4. It’s free – but you have to come and lay hold of the ticket.
5. Friend, it’s free to you – but it wasn’t free to God – it cost Him His Son
6. The cost of heaven is great – but the price has already been paid.
7. Come claim the prize!
8. Believe in Jesus – Turn now from the sin that separates you from God and rest your hope in Christ who rose from the dead on Easter morning to open wide the way to heaven to all who will believe!