

Isaiah 65:17-19 November 10 2013

Have you ever longed to arrive at a destination? I know in some cases - especially driving - I've gotten so tired during the journey, that my only thought became: just let me get a glimpse of my destination. A sight for sore eyes... a relief for the weary ~ when you see what lies ahead.

Our journey through life in this world can be much, much harder than a car ride from one place to another.

- A chronic, incurable disorder leaves one of God's family members struggling to walk, to do those things that so many of us take for granted. Her family does everything in their power to help - they are on this difficult journey with her. The Lord stoops down by the bedside. Hope and help come from Him through his Word, where he says: "Oh, my loved ones, so very precious in my sight, look forward to the time the world will be the way I made it in the first place, and life will be the way I always wanted it to be for you."
- Our journey through life in this world can be so very wearying. Among God's family members more than one son and more than one daughter are left with only one parent in their lives, or none, and an overwhelming sense of loss. The Lord reaches out to them from his Word, calling off the page in front of us: "My dearly loved sons and daughters, I will never leave you nor forsake you. And look forward to the time the world will be the way I made it in the first place, and life will be the way I always wanted it to be for you."
- Not a single one of us is excluded from the weariness that comes from traveling through this sin-pocked world. From the common cold to the disease, from a family torn apart by sin to the family walking together to the foot of the cross, as they acknowledge their sins against one another: We live in a fallen world. But God has revealed the beautiful truth about his love and his care to each one of us. More than that: He gives us hope that transcends this world.

The Lord – in Isaiah ch.65 – holds before our eyes the sight of our final destination as believers in Jesus. To His people, from His Word, he calls out to us with His comfort and assurance: **Read Vs.17-18a.** ¹⁷ *"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.* ¹⁸ *But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create..."* Ah, there it is - what I'm longing for. The eternal life, which he has won for me, is waiting. That's where we – God's people by faith – will enjoy life the way God always wanted for us.

Our Lord's encouragement to us today is...

- **Look forward to a place with forever rejoicing.** We will rejoice & God will rejoice.

This part of Isaiah (Is. 65:17, 66:22) is the one place in the whole Old Testament where God uses this specific description of how he will... *"create new heavens and a new earth"* for his people – for believers. Toward the end of the whole Bible, in 2 Pt. (3:13) & Rev. (21:1 & 21:5), God returns to this very specific and comforting reality: *"... in keeping with his promise we are **looking forward** to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."*

This is not to say we can't enjoy anything in life here. There's much to enjoy. But it always gets interrupted, or comes to an end. It's not perfect, and it doesn't last.

Then, there, in the home of righteousness no one will think: Oh, I miss this or that from my life in the old world - the way it was before. There, in the new world God is making for us, we'll enjoy life the way God

intended in the first place. Perfect. There will be no longing for the past, because we'll experience complete contentment and satisfaction in the perfect world he's creating for us.

But, how does that news help us now – as we see pain, experience heartache and face hardship in this present world ~ which is still suffering under the curse of sin? God doesn't promise to reach down and take it all away. He speaks up from His Word and comforts us, his people, with the assurances: "Call on me. I'll answer. I am here to take care of you. Be at peace." He also speaks up from His Word and comforts us, his people, with the assurance of the future he has in store for us: Look forward...

- Has your line of work caused you to be an eyewitness to the worst, the ugliness of what one human being can do to another? God has witnessed it too, and God knows the effect upon your heart. He bends down from heaven, to speak to you through his Word: "I'm here. Find your peace in my unfailing love. & Look forward..."
- How about in your personal life – is there someone important to you who persistently ridicules, insults or puts you down? God knows what you've been put through. He bends down, to support you and build you up. In quiet, but loud-and-clear wording, he speaks from these pages of Scripture: "I'm here. Find your peace in what I think about you, dearly loved child. And, Look forward..."

Along with his other gospel comforts, our Savior God comforts and encourages us by saying... Look forward to the place I am creating. Then, there, you will rejoice forever.

Then, There, Look. Take Notice. God too will no longer have any reason to grieve any more – ever again.

The pages of Scripture are a window into the heart of our God. We scroll back to Genesis and read "The Lord was grieved" over the violence and unbelief before the Flood (6:6). We read how God had called and cared for Israel with powerful protection and mighty miracles. Yet, Israel broke his heart through their repeated rebellion and rejection (Is. 63:10). On Palm Sunday Jesus wept at the sight of Jerusalem. It wasn't because of his upcoming suffering. It was because of all the people in the city who did not recognize him and the peace he came to bring them (Lk 19:41).

See into the heart of our Savior-Lord, and you see grief, sadness and tears at the sight of sin and sin's results in the world. He still grieves over the times today when people reject him and his offer of peace through Jesus. He knows the hell they will face if they turn their backs on Him, the only Way to Heaven. And the Lord says, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live" (Eze.33).

Jesus does not only grieve over rejection, he is there with us when we, his people, face loss or pain. He cried over death. He knew the anguish that Mary and Martha experienced when their brother Lazarus died. In Isaiah 63 we are told: "In all [his people's] distress he too was distressed..."

Then, here in Isaiah 65, the Lord says, "Here is something amazing. Look. A time is coming when I too will no longer have any reason to grieve any more."

Read vs.18b-19. ... [Look!] I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. ¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.

What is the most beautiful thing you've ever seen? Try to describe it to a person blind from birth. What is the most beautiful sound you've ever heard? Try to describe it to the person born deaf. Can words fully capture the reality? Doesn't one need to see it for himself or hear it for herself, in order to fully understand?

Now we can maybe think a little more... what it's like for God to describe heaven to us, who have never seen/experienced anything like it.

Try to explain what life without sin in a world without sin is like to us, who have been plagued by the effects of sin from the womb and who continue to be surrounded by this sinful world.

God, unlike anyone of us, is the One with direct knowledge of what perfect life in a perfect world is. How does he describe it? Can you and I grasp it fully?

Evil banished. Sorrow sent packing, with a one-way ticket – no return allowed. Wars. Gone. Killing. Gone. Good ridding. Terrorism. Gone. What a relief. Nursing homes. Gone. Not needed. Funeral homes. Gone. No business for them. Hunger. Sickness. Hurt. All gone. Jealousy. Bullying. Gone.

Now the best news. Guilt. Forever gone. For, then, there, sin will be forever gone from our lives – from the world.

God tells us: "No eye has seen. . . no mind can conceive what God has planned for those who love him." Doesn't that sound amazing? Heaven is beyond what we can even imagine!!!

In the new heavens and earth, the Lord will have joy over everything. Understand: The only thing he can have joy over is what he has made – because only what he has made is perfect. So how can I ~ who is definitely not perfect ~ be there? He has brought me to faith in Jesus as my Savior. He has washed me clean of all sin. I am holy, now, through faith in Jesus. God has made us His own.

Oh, to be rid of my sinful flesh, which still clings to me as long as I remain in this fallen world! Oh, to be done with the battles I daily fight against temptation! Sometimes I just want to give up and say, "Who cares?" But I know that the Enemy behind those temptations is desperately trying to get me to ultimately turn away from my God ~ because he wants to snatch my hope/my inheritance from me. I would curl up in defeat if God had not taken me by the hand, brought me to my feet and led me to the cross. Seeing the One who hung on the cross bearing the weight of my sins and that of the entire world ~ I have hope. Here I admit the many battles I have lost. I turn to my Savior to thank him for saving me! I find in him my new strength. This is the view into the heart of a believer, who still breaths the air of this fallen world.

When your heart hurts from past failures, look to the One who has washed you clean and to the eternal home you'll enjoy with him. See Jesus, standing victorious on the battle field of the cross and the grave. When Satan is bragging about his victories at tempting you, look to Jesus' victory over every one of Satan's temptations. Because of his life, be assured of the eternal home you'll enjoy with him. He provides you life and peace and joy and strength now – on this side of the grave. He waits to bring you safely to the other side of the grave too – to stand with him there.

Jesus Christ, standing outside his tomb on Easter morning. There is your glimpse of your new life. Look at Him. He lives, never to die again. That's what he promises to everyone who trusts in him.

Then, there, we will rejoice. On and on and on Joy. On and on and on Peace. On and on and on Life. On and on and on. Then, there (Isaiah 35:10) ... Gladness and joy will overtake you, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. Forever. Forever.

Today, to help us face life here and now, in our fallen world, often the encouragement the Lord gives us is... Look forward! He says, "My dear child, I know the Serpent's presence slithers throughout the pages of His-Story - from almost the first page on. Please know: it was not always this way, not from the first page of history when all was new and all was good. My dear child, I know the Devil's vile presence is felt in your day too. And that you sometimes get weary from the warfare. Please know: it will not always be this way. Look forward to the new heavens and new earth I'm creating for you. I, your Savior, am present today, with my grace and power & I – by my grace & power – will present you blameless on the Last Day. Rejoice. Stand firm. And rejoice always in that." Amen.