

Journey's End

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[0:00] Well, you've made it to the end of a journey. It was two years ago this month, April 2012. Believe it or not, that we started the series on the Song of Ascents.

And today we're going to finish with the last two psalms. So if you could turn there to Psalm 133 and 134. You remember the Songs of Ascents were pilgrim songs.

The Israelites sang them as they went up from wherever they lived up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast. So they were holiday psalms, holiday songs.

And they seem to have been collected to show a picture of the whole believer's life as they moved from wherever they were, far away, up to Jerusalem.

So from far away to the celestial city. And today we come to the end. And brothers and sisters, it's a happy ending. Psalm 133 and 134. Let's read it.

[1:09] How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity. It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, running down upon the color of his robes.

It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore. Psalm 134.

Praise the Lord. All you servants of the Lord who minister by night in the house of the Lord, lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord.

May the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion. Well, there is so much that could be said here.

And I am more aware than probably you are of how much could be said. But I must leave it out because of our time. But I want to look at these two psalms as pictures of heaven.

[2:14] As the journey's end. You've made it to the end. And so what is at the journey's end? In Pilgrim's Progress, Christian and hopeful arrive at these very high hills.

And when they are on these high hills, they meet some shepherds who are attending their sheep. And the shepherds are pastors watching over their people.

That's the picture of it. And these shepherds have a telescope. And they show Christian and hopeful something of the end. Something of the celestial city.

And that's my job today as a shepherd. To show you what's at the journey's end. You need to see the journey's end. Lest you would give up hope.

Heaven is meant to give you hope. And it's my job as a shepherd to show you. And you can see something of it in these two psalms. So what will heaven be like?

[3:18] Two points. The first is that it will be exquisite Christian fellowship. Exquisite Christian fellowship. How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity.

Now grace fellowship, how wonderful it is, isn't it? We, to a certain degree, have begun to taste this blessing. And how good and pleasant it is.

Praise God for his mercy to us. Praise God for his mercy to us. I don't have to tell you how wonderful it is when brothers live in unity. Because you've already, in part, begun to live it.

Well, heaven is already breaking here. The rays of the dawn are shining here. But there is more to come. There's better things yet ahead. There's better unity.

Better love. Better communion. In front of us. So when heaven breaks, unity will be completely restored. Christ died to reconcile all things.

[4:19] To bring everything into peace. Shalom. Unity. To unite all things. To bring all things back into harmony. But that work is far from done now. It's far from done now.

There are divisions in the universal church. Sometimes those divisions are necessary. But they are always grievous.

They're always sad. Our hearts should break whenever the church is divided. Whenever we hear of church splits. That's a mark of sin. That's a mark of this world. That is not a mark of heaven. And our hearts should break when we see Christian brothers and sisters. That they're fighting. They're not getting along. Paul said, I plead with you, Odia.

And I plead with Syntyche. To agree with each other in the Lord. Paul said, I plead. I plead for this. Will you please agree with each other?

[5:19] And how different and how unchristlike are so many brothers that are willing to disagree. Willing to break fellowship over the smallest of matters. Instead, they're looking for reasons to separate.

Instead of reasons to live together. To stay together. We should be bending over backwards to keep the unity and the bond of peace. Not to sin, of course.

But brothers and sisters, Christ prayed for unity. On that very last night, he prayed, I want them to be one as you and I, Father, are one.

Unity is not just a nice thing. It's not just whipped cream that you can do without. It's not just something that you can say, well, whatever. We don't have it. Or it's just the way things are. Christ's heart, as the great high priest, is that all of his people would be one.

And one day in heaven, we all will be one. In heaven, there will be no more divisions. No more fighting. No more disagreements.

[6:24] No more brothers and sisters that we can't agree with or live with or work with. There'll be no more divisions. There'll be no more Baptists or Presbyterians or Methodists or Anglicans or Lutherans.

And we can't say, yeah, they'll all be like us. As if we have nothing to grow in. As if we have nothing that we need to be changed in.

No, we'll all be like Christ. And that will be a great change for all of us. And then we will live in unity. What will that unity be like? Psalm 133 uses two pictures. He says, it's like precious oil just running down over Aaron's head, onto his beard, and then onto the color of his robes.

Now, if someone were to say to you, now, I heard that you go to Grace Fellowship Church. What is it like there? You probably wouldn't say, well, you know what it's like?

[7:27] It's like oil being poured on Aaron's head, falling down on his beard, running over his clothes. That's not an image that we're used to, is it?

And it's hard to know really what to make of it. But think of it from David's standpoint. This is not something humorous to him. This is something wonderful to him. Think about it from his standpoint. When Aaron was anointed, all the people were there. All the brothers, all the sons of Jacob were there. And they were watching.

And they rejoiced as they saw God's high priest take his role. They were all one in this man. This man represented them all.

And here is God blessing them, him, and blessing them. That man represented, that Aaron represented them. They're like, Christ represents us.

[8:25] And they had unity in him, just as we have unity in Jesus Christ. And then that oil, which is the picture here, it was so fragrant, so precious, so extravagant, so special, so powerful, so luxurious, so glorious.

And just the sight of Aaron dripping with this oil, it brought great joy to their hearts. It thrilled the people's hearts. It filled their senses.

You remember, I think it was Mary, when she broke the jar of perfume and she poured it on Jesus' feet.

It was such an extravagant, glorious waste, I think, of an exquisite act of love.

And that, remember that smell, it filled the whole room. That's what this unity is like. This fragrance of brotherly love, it will fill heaven.

[9:29] It will fill heaven and all of its, all the mansions in heaven with its aroma, with its luxury, with its joy. Or he says, you know what it's like? It's not only like that.

It's like the Jew of Hermon falling on Mount Zion. And now, Mount Hermon was the highest point in Israel. It was far to the north. And it was on its heights.

It was very different from so much of the rest of Israel. On its heights, there were woodlands. There was snow at the very top. So imagine this mountain, and you go to it, and there's woodlands, and there's valleys, and there's animals filling on this mountain.

And it's cool. It's refreshing. Well, Jerusalem wasn't really like that. It isn't like that. It was rocky. It was dusty. It was sandy.

But brotherly love turns dusty, rocky, sandy Jerusalem into Mount Hermon. It turns Jerusalem into a sparkling, glittering paradise.

[10:37] So refreshing. You can just breathe it in. You have to. This is poetry. The refreshing does do. Now, you know what it's like during the late spring and summer when you wake up in the morning, and there's dew on the grass, and the grass is sparkling, and the birds are singing, and it's before the heat of the day.

It's still cool. It's glorious, isn't it? It makes your heart sing. Well, that's what heaven is going to be like. That's what this brotherly love is going to be like.

It's going to be refreshing, invigorating, such joy, such peace, such fellowship with our fellow believers. It's going to be wonderful. No more divisions.

No more lack of love. Only radiant, beautiful, refreshing love. Now it's very different. Remember back in Psalm 120.

Now, this is a long time ago. The psalmist said, Woe to me that I dwell in Meshach, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. Too long have I lived with those who hate peace.

[11:43] I am a man of peace, but when they speak there for war, our hearts are so different. We're the sons of God. We're peacemakers. We naturally love peace.

And the children of men, they go about hating and being hated. That's what it's like now. People are angry. There's conflict.

There's selfishness and hatred everywhere you look. And doesn't your heart cry, I want to have peace. And one day we will have peace.

When we were at the ARPCA GA, Chaplain Stolle prayed on one occasion. So he's in the military. And it was so moving because he prayed that one day all men like him, men who carry weapons, men who stand on walls, would have no more work to do, that they could be farmers.

[12:45] There will be no more soldiers. There will be no more swords and spears because swords will be turned into plowshares. They'll be turned into instruments of farming. So, dear believer, that prayer is going to be answered one day.

And you're going to go home. And you are going to be with your family. And you're going to have peace at last. So look through the glass. This war that we're in is only temporary.

The celestial city is a city of peace. Well, what will heaven be like? Exquisite Christian fellowship. And the second thing is never-ending worship.

Never-ending worship. The songs of ascent end here. Psalm 134. It's in the temple. It's at night. And they are worshiping. 1 Chronicles 9. Probably is not a chapter you're very familiar with. But 1 Chronicles 9 talks about these men.

[13:48] There were Levites who watched over the temple both day and night. So there were Levites that never left the temple. They had their appointed times.

And when everyone else had to leave, when everyone else had to go home, these Levites stayed there. They could stay all night.

And one day, that will be us. Now we go from Sunday. We have Sunday. And then another day comes. We go Sunday after Sunday.

And we go home Sunday after Sunday. And we leave to face our Mondays. And we leave to face this world. We sing a few songs. And then we go home.

One day, every day will be Sunday. And one day, the singing will never end. We'll never leave the temple. Because one day, the whole heavens and the whole earth will be the temple of God.

[14:53] In Revelation, it gives the measurements of the new Jerusalem. Of the new heavens. The new earth coming down from God. And it's interesting.

It's a huge cube. It's 12,000 stadia. Long and wide and high. Why a cube?

Why those measurements? Well, it's a picture. It's a symbol. The only other cube in the entire Bible, where you get the measurements of something and it comes out to be a cube, is the Holy of Holies. The sacred place in the temple where God dwelt. And one time a year, a man could go in and meet with God. But now, at the end of Revelation, the whole heavens, the whole earth, is now the Holy of Holies.

Now, the whole, wherever you go. Wherever you go in the heavens and the earth, you're in the presence of God. You meet with God. And God will live with us.

[15 : 54] And we will live with Him. He will be our God. And we will be His people. And so when we've been there 10,000 years, bright shining as the sun, we'll have no less days to sing us praise than when we first begun.

We won't be able to leave. We couldn't leave, even if we wanted to, because the whole earth, the whole heavens, the whole universe will be the temple of God.

We won't have to face the world. We won't have to leave His presence. And all we will do is worship. We won't sing just three or four or six or seven songs.

We'll join the song that never ends. And we'll join our hearts and voices with angels forever and ever. And no one will ever have to say, well, it's time to leave. It's time to go home.

Because we will be home. Now, that doesn't mean that all of heaven will be a big church service. I don't believe that. I don't think that gets the full picture.

[16 : 57] No, but worship will infuse everything that we do. So we will plant gardens and build cities and learn and grow and do things.

We will have things to do. But everything will be worship. Worship will infuse every human activity. Everything we do will be in God's presence for God's glory.

And we'll lift up our hands day and night. Just as these ministers, these servants of the Lord, they lifted up their hands in the sanctuary and they worship God.

In heaven, that will be us. Everything we will do will be lifted up to God in worship and praise our bodies and our souls and our minds and our hearts.

Everything will be reached out to God. And it will be given over to never ending worship. And our hearts will yearn and find him again and again.

[17 : 57] No more will there be a veil between us and God. We will see him and we will be with him. And he will bless us. The Lord, the maker of heaven and earth, will bless us from Zion.

He will sit on his throne and he will bring his rule and his blessing to all of his people. That's what heaven is going to be like. It will be face-to-face relationship with God.

Us worshiping in all that we do. Him blessing us. And my only question is, will you be there?

Will you be there? Don't be fooled. Heaven is not the right of all men. We don't come with our birth certificate stamped going to heaven.

We don't have that visa. We don't have that passport. We have no right to heaven. Heaven is the gift of God to the children of God. So many people believe in justification by death.

[19 : 06] You just die and you get in. That's your entrance into glory. If that is the case, then Christ died for nothing and the gospel is worthless.

So don't be fooled. You aren't good enough to go to heaven. You aren't good enough to earn heaven. You haven't tried hard enough.

You haven't tried hard enough. And anyways, nowhere does God say, just try. Just do the best you can. That verse is not in the Bible.

Even though it is in the hearts of sinners. He doesn't grade on a curve. God is magnificently holy. He is unspeakably, ineffably righteous and good.

In him, he is light. And in him, there is no darkness. He will not. He cannot live with sinners. Sinners. And you're a sinner.

[20 : 12] Look down into your heart. What's at the bottom? Isn't it love for self? It's not love for God.

It's love for you. It's love for you. You care about you. And you only care about God in so much as that affects you. And that's what sin is.

It's the heart that's bent in on itself. It's the heart that says, I will do it myself. What is in it for me? Instead of a heart bent outward toward God, it is a heart bent inward toward himself.

And so that's what it means to be a sinner. That's what we come into this world as. And so your whole life, your whole being, is an offense to God because it's all done for you.

And all you do is love you. And all you do is love. All that you do is love for you, not for him. And so don't be fooled. You must see this about yourself or you'll never turn.

[21 : 18] Turn and be saved. You must see that this is the problem or you'll never repent and believe. You'll always hold out something for yourself. You need desperately to be forgiven for that heart that just sucks everything into you.

That heart that says, what's in it for me? Go into every situation. What's in it for me? You need to be forgiven. Are you forgiven? Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are

covered.

Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him. That's what you need to get into heaven. Forgiveness. So do you have a claim to heaven?

Do you have a right to heaven? Can you say that? I have a right to heaven. If you have Christ, you have a right to heaven. If you have Christ, you have a claim to heaven.

No condemnation. Now I dread. Jesus and all in him is mine. Alive in him, my living head.

En clothed in righteousness divine.

[22 : 21] Bold I approach the eternal throne. And claim the crown. Through Christ my own. Bold I approach the throne.

Why? Because of Jesus Christ. Because of his righteousness. Because of his life. His death. As long as you're doing this, pulling everything into you, there's no room in your heart for Christ. And so repent and believe Jesus Christ and claim him for your own.

And then you have a right to heaven. In the gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed. A righteousness that is by faith from first to last.

Just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith. So do you have a claim to heaven? Do you have a right to heaven?

Let's pray. Oh God, I pray that you would take that question and penetrate each of our hearts.

[23 : 24] So that we would examine ourselves and to see if we are in the faith. To examine ourselves and to see if what we believe about ourselves is really true.

The easiest thing for us to do is to assume. And to cover our sin. And to make it into a light thing. We do that by nature.

Will you please give us grace that we might see ourselves for who we are. And then embrace Jesus Christ for all that he is. Thank you that when we come to your throne on that last day, we will be able to do it with boldness because of what Jesus has done for us.

What a marvelous and amazing thing that people like us could come with full assurance and confidence. That is an amazing thing.

We thank you. We thank you that one day we will be in heaven. One day we will live with each other in perfect unity. And one day all that we will do is worship you.

[24 : 34] Father, help us to be faithful to the end then. Help us to keep persevering to the end. Help us to keep encouraging one another on. As we heard this morning, help us to encourage one another on and spur each other on and call out to each other.

Keep up. Will you please help us until we reach the end. Thank you for this body. I pray that we would be a blessing to each other. And that all that we would do would be to your glory, to your praise.

That you would be honored in what we do here as a congregation. Pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.