05/20/12

**Getting to the Core #6 - Figuring Out Where You Are Going**

- here’s an example of someone where there was real confusion about where he was going…

- this is a true story of a man from Egypt named Hamdi Hafez al-Nubi…our tech staff investigated the reliability of this so hopefully I won’t have to turn around and ask your forgiveness next week for being caught in an internet hoax…but here goes…

- Hamdi was a 28 year waiter in southern Egypt who suffered a heart attack while working…

- in line with Islamic tradition, his family took him home and began to prepare his body for burial Friday evening…

- the family and friends gathered for the funeral and everyone was so saddened because of his youth and the suddenness of his death…

- so they were all together thinking about what had happened and where Hamdi had gone just like you always would at a funeral…

- In Egypt, even though the Muslims want to bury the body as soon as possible – a doctor still has to sign the death certificate…

- obviously that’s just a formality…but an important one I suppose…

- so the doctor came during the process of the funeral and was surprised to find the body still warm…so she examined Hamdi more closely and found out that he was in fact still alive…

- [which might be one of the reasons they take that death certificate step]…

- when his mother who was obviously at the funeral heard the news…she immediately passed out…

- so now the doctor not only has the responsibility of trying to revive Hamdi…now she has to do something about his mother…

- which she was actually able to do…Hamdi wasn’t going anywhere, at least on this particular day…

- of course – what do you do next?...you’ve already got everyone there – so they threw a party…right there where they were having the funeral…it turned out to be a very convenient venue…

- the media report said**…”With the doctor’s assistance, both Al-Nubi and his mother were awakened and soon were celebrating with guests.”**

- that’s called confusion about where someone is going…

- but let’s make that much more serious…all of us will have the occasion – unless Christ returns for His own first…all of us will face the day when our death certificate has to be signed…for real…

- and then the question becomes – where are you going?...

- with that question in mind, please open your Bible to John chapter 14…page 84 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you…

- this morning we’re landing the plane on this series we’ve been doing…

- **Getting to the Core -- Six Weeks to Focus on Things That Matter Most…**

- we started by focusing on - **Figuring Out What You Believe**

- then, **Figuring Out Why You're Here**

- then **Figuring Out Who You Are**

- and **Figuring Out Who You Love**

- last week…**Figuring Out What You Want…**

- which brings us today to…**Figuring Out Where You're Going…**

- this morning we’re thinking about God’s promise of heaven.

- in these verses, we find three promises God has made about your eternal home.

**- READ John 14:1-6**

- in these verses, we find **three promises God has made about your eternal home**.

**I. There Are Many Rooms**

**A. Always be on the lookout for “non-routine terms” as you study Scripture.**

- a key principle of Bible study is that as you’re reading, always be on the lookout for “non-routine” terms.

- “non-routine” terms are the ones that especially contribute to the overall logic or flow of thought....

- the point that the writer...and of course ultimately...the point that God is trying to make.

- in my Father’s house are many mansions, or many rooms.

- question is -- which words in that phrase deserve the primary focus? What should we lock on to the most?

- the answer that many folks would give is --- the word mansions...or rooms.

- our attention sort of naturally gravitates there...and pretty soon we’re thinking about what our heavenly home is going to be like, decorated like…features, amenities…humming “I’ve got a mansion just over the hilltop...” as if that’s the most significant facet of what our Lord was promising.

- I’d like to present to you this morning that if that’s the way we tend to look at this promise, we’ve missed a very important idea.

- What word in that phrase deserves primary focus?

**B. Key word that deserves focus?**

- I’d like to present to you that the answer to that question is....the word **“many”.**

- Now you might ask --- why in the world would you say that?

- the answer is -- because of the context of these verses....

- what has just happened in the verses that precede the ones we’re looking at?

- the answer to that is --- the early events at the Lord’s table.

- John 14 was spoken at the Last Supper....the Passover meal Jesus celebrated with the disciples before He was taken, tried, and crucified.

**C. Think about the context of this passage.**

- think back over what the Bible says happened that night....in fact it’s recorded in John 13.

- Four main things....

**1) No one was willing to assume the position of servant and wash the other’s feet so the Lord had to do it**....so they had already blown it and Jesus had to model for them how to do it right.

**2) The Lord foretold the betrayal of Judas and moments later Judas showed his unbelieving heart by leaving the table to go and betray Christ.**

**3) Jesus then explained to the disciples that He would be going away, and they would not be able to follow Him.**

**4) Then Peter made the boast that he would lay down his life for Christ, to which Jesus responded that before the cock crowed twice, Peter would deny Him three times.**

- they were in a position of great uncertainty....

- uncertainty about their future...what would happen to them after Jesus left...

- uncertainty about themselves...what would happen to them if they were going to fail the way Jesus said Peter would...

- In was in that setting that Jesus spoke the words we’re looking at this morning, words by the way that began in verse 1 and ended in verse 27 in with the encouragement to “Let not your heart be troubled...”

- what news would calm their hearts when facing Jesus’ departure and their own creaturely weakness?

- that there was plenty of room in heaven for them....

- they had trusted Christ --- “you believe in God, believe also in me....”

- Judas never did that, but you have....and because you have...in my father’s house....there is room for you.

- in my Father’s house, there are many, many dwelling places…

- another way of stating what we’re talking about from this part of the promise is...John 14:2, understood in its context, is a wonderful testimony to the doctrine of eternal security.

- Earlier John had recorded in chapter 10 where Jesus said..

- **John 10:27-29 - "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. "My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand.”**

- and now we have the same kind of emphasis....

- yes, disciples you blew it by failing to be servants....

- and yes, I’m going away, and there’s going to be additional failures...

- Peter is going to deny me three times, and if a man as bold as Peter will deny me....you’re all in trouble.

- but be encouraged by this...

- In my father’s house are many dwelling places....

- heaven isn’t a place for perfect people...heaven is a place for forgiven people---who are there only because they are clothed in the righteousness /// the perfection of Jesus Christ.

- Now, there are a number of ways we could apply this part of the passage....but let me limit it at this point to this...

- Occasionally I’ll run across someone who appears to have concluded...

- because I messed up in the past...God can’t use me anymore...

- there’s no use in my trying....

- there’s no use in me attempting to get back on the right track...

- and whether they actually doubt their salvation or not....

- the main issue is they’ve concluded....

- God no longer has any interest in me....God no longer has a place for me...

- there’s no reason to try to get out of this sin....

- there’s no reason to me to think that God could ever use me in the future.....There’s no use for me to try any more.

- Listen, on the authority of a wonderful promise of God...viewed in its context of the human failure of John 13....

- there’s still room for you.

- if you’ve never trusted Christ, God wants you to confess that you’re a sinner and trust Him as your savior and Lord.

- If you have genuinely become a believer...maybe you did mess up ---- but I assure you --- you haven’t lost your room---Your reservation is not based on your works...

- it’s not based on your righteousness...

- that’s why in verse 6 Christ said....I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life....no man comes to the father but by me.

- another way of saying this is -- there are no eraser marks in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

- and I’m not advocating that we take a lackadaisical attitude toward sin....

- if you did, that might very well indicate that you were never genuinely saved in the first place...

- but right now, I’m talking about genuine believers who have failed...

- when and if you do....

- or, when and if you have....

- please don't conclude that you shouldn’t try to get back up...

- because God wants you to come and ask His forgiveness

- and God wants you to get back on the right path...

- and apparently Jesus believed that what would motivate them the most to live for Him, and to love Him, and to serve Him...

- wasn’t the threat that if they didn’t, they’d lose their place in heaven.

- instead he said --- your place is secure...in my father’s house are many rooms.

- now what’s the second part of this promise?

**II. Jesus is Preparing It**

- In my father’s house are many rooms, if it were not so, I would have told you...I am going to prepare a place for you.

**A. Can you imagine what it will be like to live in a place that Jesus prepared?**

- I appreciate the way people care for me when I travel – I’m often treated very well for sure…

- but every so often places just stand out…

- [cf. speaking at Master’s College/Seminary commencement – luxury suite at a beautiful CA hotel, array of things to eat and drink – would have taken me a week to eat it all – but especially the special edition of John’s study Bible…]

- I’m sure you too have been to places that are really well built or well prepared…now enhance that 1000 fold and think about what this passage is telling us…Jesus is preparing a place for us…

- I would encourage you to read this book by Randy Alcorn entitled **Heaven…**

- the Bible doesn’t tell us a lot of details about heaven—but this book will give you a better understanding of what Scripture does say…

- but when you think about – what else do you need to know – than the fact that Jesus is preparing it?...

- the day I was preparing for this message, I dropped Drew off at his bus-stop Tuesday morning…

- Kris and I alternate the days we drop Drew off here at the CC where his bus meets us…

- and in a pastor’s world – you finish one message on Sunday and then you immediately start thinking about what’s next … Sunday is always coming…

- and in my case, I’m very regimented, so I always study on Tuesdays…so anyway, I had been thinking about these ideas…

- and then stepping onto Drew’s bus puts things in an entirely different perspective…

- sure he may not be able to see – but the day is coming when he is going to be in heaven…

- and I stepped up on his bus and looked around at the other children…and the phrase that came to my mind was…just a little while…

**- 1 Peter 1:3-9 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.**

**- Romans 8:18 - For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

- you know, all of this is well and good....but I wonder how much the thought of a place called heaven...prepared by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...excites the average American Christian today?

**B. Remember, a promise only has the intended motivational effect if you value the article being promised.**

- for example...let’s say that on the way in to the auditorium this morning. one of the ushers pulled you aside and said....listen...

- if you’ll sit real still during the service...

- and if you’ll sing loud when we’re singing...

- and if you’ll listen real close during the message...and even take notes....

- after the service, I’ll take you out and buy you an Anchovy Pizza!

- now, how many of you would find that motivating? - probably not many of us.

- but I wonder how close that analogy might be to what we’re talking about this morning.

- I wonder if many American Christians are so in love with the world that the thought of heaven doesn’t excite them very much.

- Jesus gave us this promise about heaven in part because He wants us to be heavenly minded people....to have an eye on eternity....to have a concern about what the Father is doing in heaven....

**C. Take aways**

**1. Pray about heaven.**

- **Matthew 6:9-10 - “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.**

- this goes right along with what we studied last week regarding desires…

- seek to get your desires in sync with the Lord – one of the ways we do that is through the way we pray…

**2. Think about heaven.**

**Colossians 3:1-2 - Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.**

- Friend, I have to ask you --- are you a heavenly minded person or an earthly minded one?

- now I’m not talking about you being a monk...

- not talking about you sitting around all day with your Bible on your lap gazing up into the heavens...

- but you and I have the ability to decide what we love....

- we have the ability to decide what we treasure...

- we have the ability to decide what excites us...

- WE CHOOSE whether God’s promise of heaven is going to have the motivational effect that our loving Savior intended...

- Jesus did not pray that we would be taken out of this world....but He does want us to live in a heavenly-minded way....

- He does want us to be appropriately motivated by the promise He’s made...

- He does want us to live in a way that His will is done on earth (at least in our lives)...that His will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

- Now, someone might rightly ask --- what might that look like?

- what does a heavenly minded, godly, growing believer who has been rightly impacted by the promise of heaven look like?

1) It affects your morning routine....

- for an earthly minded person --- all they’ll do is watch the morning news, read the paper, listen to the radio news....

- not that there’s anything wrong with those things in of themselves...

- but the earthly minded person will get all caught up on what’s happening on earth and out the door they go.

- no thought of opening God’s Word....no thought of getting a heavenly perspective on the day....

- no thought of what Jesus wants to see accomplished in their life that day...

- no thought of planning to live that day like a HEAVEN BOUND PERSON ought to live

- no concern about how to faithfully live before, and faithfully witness to people who are not on their way to heaven...

- it’s just earthly stuff....

2) Let’s think about that person’s mind in the morning for a minute...

- what happens internally when that person wakes up?

- the mind just starts thinking about earthly stuff...

- it may be worrying and fretting about all the details of the day....

- it may be planning and scheming about how to get even with the person who wronged them the day before...

- it may begin immediately thinking about money...namely how they can get more money, and get more money, and get more money

- it may be all concerned with the hair and the body .. and maybe even dressing provocatively or inappropriately so attention can be drawn to self...

- what about the heavenly minded person?

- my....the fact that Jesus’ promise of heaven is in the equation changes everything, doesn’t it?

1) The people that wronged you yesterday...

- those aren’t people to get even with....

- they’re not people you want to exercise vengeance on...

- the God of HEAVEN was involved in that

- He can use their mistreatment for good in your life...

- so you pray for those who despitefully use you...

- and you plan to return good for evil with that person today

- Why? because that wasn’t some earthly event ---- the God of heaven is involved.

- heavenly minded people don't forget that.

2) The trials you’re facing...

- heavenly minded people are in the Scriptures...

- they want to handle those trials biblically

- they don’t believe in chance and circumstance...

- they believe in the God of heaven

3) What about the way heavenly minded people treat others....how do people who honestly believe Jesus’ promise that they are on their way to heaven because of their faith in Christ....treat the people God has placed around them...

- you better believe this....

- they don’t use them...they don’t sin with them...

- they don’t flirt with them…they don’t manipulate them...

- they don’t needlessly offend them...heavenly minded people try to win them....

- people who honestly believe that Jesus is taking them to heaven want to take somebody with them.

- there’s one more element of the promise I’d like us to think about:

**III. Jesus Wants You to be There With Him.**

**- John 14:3 - “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.**

- there are a number of things about this part of the promise, but perhaps the most astounding is that Jesus wants us to be with Him.

- in fact, in chapter 17....when our Lord is giving His high priestly prayer...

- he actually prays, and asks His Father, that while He was going out of the world....

- and we His children would be left in the world

- He prays that the Heavenly father would keep us...

- and would bring us to heaven...

- so we could be with Him...just as He is with the Father.

- On the authority of this passage, Jesus Christ wants to be with you, and He wants you to be with Him.

- Isn’t that unbelievable...

- we’re not talking about Lord just tolerating the fact that we made it to heaven...(here comes that Viars again, He is such a bore)

- He wants to be with you.

- When I was growing up, my father used to take annual fishing trips to Canada with some friends of his from the army.

- When I got to be 10 years old, he started taking me along with the group.

- that always had a profound effect on me...that my dad wanted to be with me...

- even when he was around his friends, he wanted to be with me.

- Ernest Hemingway wrote to a friend and said...

- To me, heaven would be a big bull ring with me holding two first row seats...

- And a trout stream outside that no one else was allowed to fish in...

- And two lovely houses in the town, one where I would have my wife and children and be monogamous and love them truly and well...

- And one where I would have my nine beautiful mistresses on nine different floors

- What a wicked, selfish view of heaven...

- The greatest thing about heaven is that God will be there, and He wants us to be there with Him.

- that’s why Paul said in I Cor. 13 - But now we see in a mirror, dimly...but then, face to face.

- the thought of seeing his Savior was a wonderful motivation to Paul.

- Friend, if you’ve not trusted Christ...would you trust Him today?

- this promise is only for those who have believed in Christ...I am the way...

- why don’t you come to him today?

- Believing friend....how does God want his promise of heaven to impact your heart and life?

- What would be different if your belief in this promise because more real.

- You’ll never have to say --- I don't have a home.

- When I finished seminary, Kris and I were excited about getting right into the ministry.

- I was going to work on one more degree part time in Philadelphia, but I had also taken a position at a church and Christian School in Trenton, NJ.

- I had some friends who were already working there, and I asked them to find Kris and I an apartment....no reason to waste a trip going out first....they could surely find us something.

- of course, at the time, they were all bachelors....but they could get the job done.

- We also knew we were going to be tight on funds...

- Kris had been working to put me through graduate school, and we had barely stayed ahead of the next tuition bill...

- Also my starting salary at this ministry was going to be $15,000 a year.

- So I instructed my friends to find a place that was reasonable (which on the East Coast is not a word that goes with housing very well)

- So they found a place, and the day after Christmas, we loaded all our things in a Ryder truck and headed for NJ.

- We decided to drive all night since we were really excited about getting there...(at least that’s the way I remember this part of the story...you may want to verify this with my wife Kris)

- I hadn’t thought about the fact that it would take longer to drive a moving van than it would have taken driving a car.

- Nor did I think about the fact that it could be bad weather that time of year...which it was....which we hit in the middle of the night.

- To make a long story short, the truck had previously been in an accident so the door wouldn’t close....the heater didn’t work....we got lost once we got into NJ....

- but at least we were going to get to move into our new home....

- we drive up to the place my friends had reserved....and let’s just say it didn’t have a lot of curb appeal.

- we found the manager and got the key...and he mentioned how sorry he was that they hadn’t had time to clean it up....but that the previous people wouldn’t move out so they had to evict them.

- his recommendation was that we move in all our things and they would be happy to clean up around us.

- We opened the door to that apartment and could not believe the stench.

- We walked into the kitchen and it looked like it hadn’t been cleaned in years...

- Kris is looking at me....I am looking at her....

- I am definitely glad the kitchen utensils had not been unpacked at that time...I’m not sure what might have happened with the butcher knife...

- but the kicker was this...Kris walks into the bathroom....and says...Steve...

(we had been married long enough that I knew what that meant....Steve....)

- I walked into the bathroom --- and apparently the person in the apartment above us had had a fairly good sized leak in his bathroom....because the drywall had caved in, and you could actually look up through the hole and see his bathroom.

- Without going into a lot more detail...we decided not to take that apartment, and thanked the man for his time.

- But what I remember about that event the most, even though it happened over twelve years ago, was the sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach...

- as we walked back to the truck...

- it was just getting dark, and we thought....we don’t have a home....we don't have anywhere to go.

- see, can you imagine that?...Can you imagine anything worse than that?

- the answer is “yes”

- because there are many men and women who live in our town, who live in our state, who live in our country, who live in our world....

- who don't know where they’re going to live in eternity....

- they’re unsure of their eternal home...

- but that will never be true of His children.

- Because you know where you’re going…