

Rooted: Heaven

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 November 2023

Preacher: Kent Dixon

- [0 : 0 0] If you've been outside lately, it's not looking anything like Christmas, is it? Is anyone golfing tomorrow? I'm not. I don't believe in golf.
- But in here, it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas, isn't it? Did you walk in this morning and feel joy and light, literally and figuratively?
- This is the most wonderful time of the year for me in so many ways. I love it. And so all of this could not have happened with lots of people. So I made a list last night.
- Ruth Andrews and her daughter Rachel were here to help. A lady that I live with was here. Carol Mudrick, Donna Ritter, and her friend Dawn. Linda Hay was here.
- Pat was here. Our admin, Angela, and her husband Brian were here. And some pastor showed up as well. So it took all of us, and it took time and effort.
- [0 : 5 8] But look at the beauty that surrounds us and the effort that has borne fruit in this way. It's such a joy to enter this season with the lights and the trees and everything around us.
- It just gives me joy in my heart. So welcome here for this Sunday, November 26th. My name is Kent Dixon, and it is my joy to be the pastor here.
- So welcome to each of you this morning as you're sitting, staring back at me. Some with blank expressions. No, I'm just kidding. It's the Christmas lights, right? They're mesmerizing.
- And also we recognize that people do listen in the days ahead on the website and on the phone line and some other channels. So welcome to those people as well. So I'm going to jump ahead for a second.
- Next Sunday, we'll be starting our Advent Sermon series called Christmas Playlist. So you'll want to come back for that. There's a nice little slide. And this is a great time to bring friends or family with you because we're going to be exploring the Christmas season together as we lead up to Christmas through the Advent season.
- [2 : 0 9] Another thing that we're going to do next week. So this is an open invitation. Michelle suggested to me because last Christmas season, our theme was, everybody remember?
- Ugly Christmas sweater. So everybody went to the effort to get ugly Christmas sweaters and everybody participated and had so much fun. So I invite you at Michelle's suggestion to wear an ugly Christmas sweater for every Sunday during Advent.
- Let's make it fun. So I will also join in that. We need to get out our ugly Christmas sweaters that we held on to for just such an occasion. So I invite you to do that.
- Don't feel like you have to, but it was fun last year and I think we could have fun again. Question for you. Do you have a favorite place that you really like to be? And don't worry, the correct answer doesn't have to be church, right?
- When a pastor tells a story about a squirrel and, oh, there was a squirrel. And so it's not an illustration that you're supposed to say, Jesus, the squirrel is Jesus, right? So I'm not saying that the right answer is church, but that's just fine, that answer.

- [3 : 19] So I personally love to be in the mountains. And you've heard me say this many times. The sights and sounds and smells and even the tastes, if you stop for ice cream, are all special to me.
- And that's one of my special places. One of my favorite places is to be in the mountains. And also, as crazy as this may seem to some people, I've met lots of people that think that we are nuts for this.
- Even as someone who doesn't love big crowds, introvert, I love Disneyland. Love it. Love it, love it, love it. Have forever, ever since I was little.
- It's a place that holds many special memories from my own childhood and through the childhoods of our children. Even on our honeymoon, actually. Right through to more recently.
- We were just back again in January. And we love it there. So now think about your favorite place. It can be absolutely, if you could be absolutely anywhere right now, where would it be?
- [4 : 24] Think about that place in your mind. And think about what it is that makes that place so special to you. This morning, we're wrapping up our Christmas, or sorry, I've got Christmas on the mind, right?
- We're wrapping up our sermon series, Rooted, that we've been in since the fall. And so we're wrapping it up, Christmas pun intended. But since we started this series in the beginning of September, we've been considering many of the things that form the foundation of our faith.
- And this series is focused on important things that we need to remember and understand clearly to remain rooted firmly in Christianity. Every sermon in this series will be available on the website and on the podcast, so you can revisit them, or you can catch up if you've missed any of them.
- So over this series, we've talked about the Bible, the characteristics of God, the Trinity, prayer, angels, demons, and spiritual warfare.
- That was a popular one. Baptism and communion, sin, Jesus Christ. And then the trilogy that I mentioned that we started a few weeks ago, I said it'll be an informal trilogy.
- [5 : 37] Death. Last week, what will happen when Jesus returns? And now this morning, as we come to the end of this sermon series with a sermon about heaven.
- That is the place where I hope we'll all be one day. Because I've got people waiting for me there that I am looking forward to seeing again.
- And I'm sure you do too. Last week, we talked a bit about final judgment. We were reminded that one day Jesus will come back to earth. He will judge every person who has ever lived.
- And for those who have rejected him after their final judgment, they will enter hell for all eternity. Which is what the Bible is clear about.
- But for those of us who trust Jesus, for people who declare him as their Lord and Savior, life, real life, will begin in that moment after the final judgment.
- [6 : 40] John 14, verses 1 to 3 says, Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God.
- Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you. Sorry, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?
- And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again. And will take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also.

Jesus will say to everyone who has believed in him, Okay, time to go home. I've been getting it ready for you. So let's dig in and see if we can gain some perspective together with the Bible as our guide.

Does that sound okay? Where is heaven? Well, first, heaven is where God lives.

[7 : 45] The Lord's Prayer that Jesus taught us says, Our Father who art in heaven. Talking about the Father and immediately indicating where he is.

The Father is there right now. 1 Peter 3, verse 22 says that Jesus said, Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Jesus is at the right hand of the Father in heaven. And so we know that God is omnipresent, right? We know that he is everywhere. But he makes his presence known most clearly in heaven.

We've talked over the years about our world not being how it was meant to be. You've heard me say that before. This, what we're experiencing in our world, is not how it's meant to be.

It is broken. It is tainted. But friends, heaven is free, completely free, from any of that brokenness. God's glory is clear and reigns supreme in heaven.

[9 : 00] Heaven is a place where God is rightly worshipped and praised. Second, in case you were wondering, heaven is a real place.

Acts 1, verses 9 to 11 says, speaking of Jesus' ascension after his resurrection. And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

And when they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes and said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

Heaven, my friends, is an actual place.

It's a destination where we read in scripture Jesus went and where he is now. But the Bible tells us even more than that.

[10 : 05] The Bible tells us that heaven and earth will be restored. They'll be renewed after the final judgment. Isaiah 65, verse 17, God is speaking here.

He says, For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. God is going to make the entire universe, all of creation, brand new.

And heaven and earth, as you see there, will be brought together. Where do we read that? Where do we learn that? Revelation 21, verses 1 to 3. It says, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. So the Bible is telling us that God will bring literal heaven and literal earth together.

[11 : 32] What does that look like? Excellent question. I have no idea. But this new heaven and earth will be the same place. They will be united.

Essentially, everywhere will be in the presence of God, and in the way that he always intended it to be. We can't even begin to wrap our heads around this, because what we've always known has always been not the way God intended.

Right? We also know that the earth, from Scripture, we know that the earth will be renewed, restored, and released, set free. Romans 8, verses 20 and 21, Paul says, For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption, and obtained the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

So sin not only cursed humanity, but it cursed all of creation as well. But when God restores heaven and earth and unites them, that curse will be gone.

It will be lifted forever. Revelation 2, verse 3 says, No longer will there be anything accursed, or accursed if you prefer, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

[13 : 06] Creation itself will be free from the consequences and restrictions of sin, and everything will be restored to the way God originally intended it to be.

So everything will finally be, ultimately be, always as it was intended to be, according to God's plan. The world will no longer be broken.

People will no longer be broken. Revelation 21, verse 4 says, and I've quoted this a lot in memorial services, because it's important.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

So what will heaven be like for us? We don't know 100%, but the Bible tells us lots. So let's look at some of the things that the Bible specifically tells us.

[14 : 17] We will have new glorified bodies. No amen for that, eh? I don't know about you, but when I get woken up by sciatica in the night, I think, I can hardly wait, because this stinks.

Not sleeping well, putting on weight, losing weight, losing your hair, can't walk, ugh, it's old, right? It's getting old.

So Philippians 3, verse 20 and 21 says, but our citizenship is in heaven. We're not here forever. And from it, we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Can you imagine this? No more aging. No more weakness. No more sickness. Even death will be shattered.

How about this? We'll be able to interact with God personally and directly. Isn't that exciting? That's exciting to me. Revelation 21, verse 3 says, and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, and I read this a moment ago, behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

[15 : 45] He will dwell with them. And they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. We'll see Jesus.

Jesus. We'll be able to talk to him. The best part about this, time, do you recognize? Time will no longer be a factor.

How many of our human expressions, I've said this many times over the years, how many of our human expressions are related to the finite nature of our time? I'm going to spend time with someone.

I'm running out of time. Time is short. I don't have time. Time will no longer be a factor for us.

Nothing to cause us worry or stress, because guess what? Those will be gone as well. With eternity on our side, we will have forever, we can't even wrap our heads around eternity or forever.

[16 : 53] It's a long, long, long, long, long, long, long, long, long, long, long time. With eternity on our side, we'll have forever to interact with Jesus, to catch up with the people that we've missed.

I'm looking forward to meeting people that I know are with Jesus now that I've never known in my life. Pretty neat. They're just waiting. And I'll get there, because that sounds boring.

But I'll get there, too. The time that we'll have, see, even as a human being, we say time. It'll be irrelevant. You'll be able to have a conversation of any length you ever wanted to have and catch up with all the people that you've deeply missed and never met.

I'm going to monopolize Jesus' time like you cannot believe. But time won't matter. So we won't have to worry about waiting in line to see Jesus. We can interact, we'll be able to interact with him, to laugh with him, to share experience with him and with others.

We will worship Jesus. Revelation 5, verse 13 says, And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them saying, To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.

[18 : 30] Amen. Nothing will ever hinder our worship. And I believe it will become abundantly more clear to us why God alone is worthy of our worship because we'll be right with him.

Do you ever get stirred when you're in, when you're worshiping God, singing or just being quiet and listening to other people sing or just spending time worshiping him in silence, in prayer?

We'll be able to do that forever. forever. And again, if that sounds boring, hold that thought. So are you worried about perhaps missing out on some of the things that you enjoy right now?

Well, thankfully, the Bible seems to suggest that we will still eat. Revelation 19 verse 9 says, And the angel said to me, Write this, Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

and he said to me, These are the true words of God. Revelation 22 verse 1 and 2 says, Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city.

[19 : 52] Also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

You might say, Well, Pastor Kent, the supper that is mentioned here isn't actually a supper. It's not a real meal. It's a metaphor, things like that.

The fruit that is mentioned isn't actual fruit. But I have a question for you. Why wouldn't it be? Why couldn't it be? Do you think God would take away something so pleasurable for us, the way that we enjoy our senses that he gave us, do you not see him actually heightening those things for us rather than taking them away?

Will there be animals in heaven? Well, I can tell you what I personally believe based on the souls of animals that I have personally interacted with.

That's not weird and mystical. I've just known some animals that if that animal, that dog, that cat doesn't have a soul, I'm shocked because there's tenderness and a caring spirit I've experienced that to me speaks of a soul.

[21 : 18] Revelation 19 verse 11 to 13 says, Then I saw heaven opened and behold, a white horse. The one sitting on it is called faithful and true and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

His eyes are like a flame of fire and on his head are many diadems, crowns, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.

He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood and the name by which he is called is the word of God. So you could argue this is imagery or metaphor at work.

We know Revelation is and you've heard me say before it's a particular genre within the Bible called apocalyptic literature. So does everything have a literal application in Revelation?

A direct connection to reality? Not necessarily. So there's a reference here to a horse. Could it be a real horse?

[22 : 25] Why not? Will Jesus come on a real horse? Why not? remember we heard Isaiah 65 17 say for behold I create new heavens and a new earth and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.

Now I think people may read that and think well nothing that we know right now is going to be there is going to be in the new heaven and new earth but again at the risk of sounding like a parrot why not?

Why would Jesus create why would God create to obliterate and start over with something unfamiliar? It's possible but why would it not be familiar?

Isaiah 65 verse 25 says the wolf and the lamb shall graze together the lion shall eat straw like the ox and dust shall be the serpent's food they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain says the Lord.

There are relationships there between animals that may be redeemed. There's a suggestion there. So while we may have a sense that familiar things some of them will not be the same we also get a sense that there are familiar things such as animals that will still be part of the new earth but in a restored and always intended kind of way.

[24 : 03] Now I know this will resonate with a few people and I'm not going to name names. Are you concerned heaven will be boring? You can be honest.

Have you always had a sense, I remember having that sense as a child, that heaven will be just about floating around forever singing and playing instruments?

That's sure what popular culture has shown us in lots of ways. What if I don't like to sing? What if I can't sing? Are there bagpipes in heaven?

What if I never learned an instrument? It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. Are you worried, for many of us this will be familiar, are you worried that heaven will just be about laying around on clouds eating bagels and cream cheese for eternity?

Commercial from the 90s. Friends, let me encourage you that I don't see anything, anything in the Bible that suggests heaven will be boring.

[25 : 12] We will laugh. In Luke 6, verse 21, Jesus said, blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Just a quick sidetrack, don't panic. I believe we will have responsibilities in heaven.

I think we'll have things to do. I don't know what that looks like. But to me, Jesus' parable of the faithful servant in Luke suggests that we will be rewarded for what we have done, what God gave us and asked us to do on earth, and in heaven.

So how might that work? We don't know yet, and that's okay to not know. We will sing and make music.

Revelation 14, verse 2 and 3 says, and I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters, and like the sound of thunder.

[26 : 19] The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, and they were singing a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and before the elders.

No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. We will sing and make music, and if you don't know how to sing and don't know how to play an instrument, I think we'll figure it out.

heaven will be a place of pure joy. Luke 6, verse 23 says, rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven, for so their fathers did to the prophets.

Psalms 16, verse 11 says, you make known to me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy, and at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

We touched on this a little while ago. We will see Jesus' face. Hopefully you guys don't feel awkward when I freeze emotionally.

[27 : 37] I remember sitting in many congregations over the years in my life, and a pastor would freeze. You could tell they were moved. It's like, oh, oh dear, what do we do?

It's okay. I'll pull myself together. I blame my father, who's now laughing from heaven, because I used to tease him about getting moved when he preached, or when he spoke, or when emotion came to the surface for him.

I used to tease him about it, and he's going, ha, how do you like it? Smarty pants. Revelation 22, verse 4 says, they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

We will see Jesus' face. The one we're putting all our faith and trust in now, we will be with him in person, and we will finally see him.

Heaven. God's ultimate unity of heaven and a new earth is our ultimate destination and our home. God's ultimate God's ultimate God's ultimate faith.

[28 : 42] We can have faith that it is a real place. It's the place where everything we've ever longed for will finally be fulfilled forever and ever.

Amen. The renewal and restoration that will only be fully realized in heaven is only available by putting your faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

So my friends, secure and reaffirm your citizenship in heaven. I invite you to pray this prayer with me.

Lord Jesus, I come to you now with an attitude of repentance. I know that I have not been living my life the way I should be as a Christian.

I'm so grateful for the grace that you've given me as your child. Lord, grant me the strength to overcome the ways of this world and to turn to you in all situations.

[29 : 46] Help me to know you more and to desire each day to walk with you. Lord, I choose today to recommit to living my life as a follower of Jesus and to turn away from the ways of the world.

And I pray that you will honor my prayer. Holy Spirit, please give me the strength to overcome temptation and sin in my daily life. Father God, I thank you for saving me and I offer myself to you now as a living sacrifice.

And it's in the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.