

Looking Forward to Heaven

‡ Come to repentance (vv.8,9)

‡ Expect global burning (vv.10-12)

‡ Hurry to be at peace with God (vv.13,14)

In the name of Jesus, the coming Savior of all, dearly redeemed believers:

When our children were little, my wife Cindy and I followed the advice of mature members and strengthened our relationship by getting away just the two of us. Kind hearted Christians at New Life would watch our four little ones while we headed for Grand Marais on the North Shore of Lake Superior. Former member Linda Schiller liked to say of her experience up there, *“He restoreth my soul.”* Driving north from Grand Marais through the Sawtooth Mountains into the inland valleys, we stopped for a steak at Poplar Lake Lodge. There I saw something new to me. Snow mobiles were driven right up to the gas pumps to fill up and head off down the trail into the boundless reaches of wilderness in the Boundary Waters Canoe area. Thousands escape north for lakes and trails year round to enjoy God’s wonderful creation. But I can’t help thinking how we *Americans worship our work, work at our play and play at our worship*. I can’t help wondering whether my fellow Americans are *Looking Forward to Heaven*.

‡ Come to repentance (vv.8,9)

One thing about vacation time and holidays with loved ones is that the days always seem to fly by so much quicker than other days. Yet everyone know the days are all the same length, twenty-four hours give or take a few minutes that we make up in leap years. That’s why it seems so strange how many Christian scholars and theologians are will to quote these words against God: *“With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.”* Strangely, they try to use this to make room for millions and billions of years in *theistic evolution* that tries to join the Bible with modern secularist science. Unfortunately, no Bible-believing Christian can accept this, nor can any serious scientist even if hardcore humanist. God knows how to tell time. He invented it. He regulates it with the light giving bodies He created along with all things in six, 24-hour days in which *“there was evening and there was morning – the first, second...sixth day.”* Who could make this up? God created light on the first day (Sunday) and the light giving bodies on day four (Wednesday).

And He’s been using His Word ever since to enlighten us. By His Word He who won our hearts. With His mercy and grace God has restored by faith in Jesus something we lost in the Fall. When Adam and Eve rebelled, they not only lost the Garden Paradise of Eden, more tragically they lost the image of God. You can see it in their shame, blaming of each other and ultimately God. We’re still hearing the sons and daughters of that first rebellious couple blaming God today. Some insist that if He really were a God of love, He would end all the suffering. Others go one step further and conclude that therefore God must be impotent, powerless to do anything about the suffering we see. It’s as foolish as a gold fish criticizing its owner for the fire in the fire place that keep his fish bowl from freezing in the dead of winter. We barely see a fraction of the suffering here. How can God see yet let it go on?

Why not let God explain through His holy Apostle Peter? *“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”* God sees something coming for which He wants to give everyone time to *“repent,”* to change our minds about sin and self and God, to accept His forgiveness won on the cross and guaranteed by Christ’s empty tomb. Infinite in love and power God, waits patiently for everyone to **Come to repentance**. He wants us *Looking Forward to Heaven*.

† Expect global burning (vv.10-12)

But not everyone will care. Many pointy-headed intellectuals may not believe everything actually evolved by chance, but they tell me they have no use for the alternative. Little wonder! While they're worrying about what they call "global warming," God has been warning for centuries for everyone to **Expect global burning**. Jesus set this up in Matthew 24, where He said the last days would be like the days of Noah when everyone went about their business, held weddings and ignored the big boat being built on dry land by the LORD's prophet. Noah preached 120 years to a dead audience. The only seven who listened were his wife, his three sons and their wives. But the flood came and swept away millions, perhaps billions of unbelievers living on a God's green earth, lush with vegetation from pole to pole.

Next time, not water, but fire will be God's tool to destroy what He created as surely as you have every right to till your garden in the spring and blow your driveway in the winter. Suddenly, ***"the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare....That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat."***

Christians even without a church affiliation are sure of this. One example is Roberta Louise Hill, the mother of one of our soon-to-be members. Roberta showed her faith by two beautiful passages left in her apartment. Roberta could face reality squarely and not flinch because she trusted God's Word through His Apostle Paul: ***"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."*** (2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NIV)

Like every believer in Jesus as Christ and Lord and the Savior-Son of God, Roberta knew how she would rise above the **global burning** as she soared above the heartaches and troubles of this life. From 700 B.C. come these famous, God-inspired words of Isaiah and copied on one of Roberta's note cards: ***"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."*** (40:31 KJV)

† Hurry to be at peace with God (vv.13,14)

Would you like to have this faith that triumphs in life and in death? God wants you to have it too. The cross of Jesus Christ is the proof that cannot be argued away. When God raised Jesus from the dead, He declared the whole world "not guilty" for our Adam-like rebellion. In other words, Jesus' blood and righteousness count for all as surely as if God wrote out a check in your name for eternal life. The Good News Gospel of what Jesus has done for all holds this out for you to receive. By faith which God gives, He wants each of us to cash in on His free gift of life everlasting. And when you do, it will show, just as it shows in the legacy of Christians in their marriage and children who share their faith in Jesus Christ.

"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming....In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him."

You are ***"at peace with"*** God when you trust that what Jesus did counts for you. The war is over. Enjoy God's ***peace***. Live as God's new creation in Christ – holy like God in your emotions, your intellect and your will. Don't worry whether people like what you do or whether Hollywood has any use for the lifestyle that walks in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd. You are headed by faith to ***"the home of righteousness"*** in ***"the new heavens and the new earth"*** where ***"[God] will wipe every tear from [our] eyes, [where] there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*** (Revelation 21:4 NIV) Looking at Jesus, keep **Looking Forward to Heaven**. Amen.