

Goal: The hearers would live the hope they have been given Jesus.

Last Sunday, we heard about the angel flying overhead with a gospel of judgment to proclaim to all nations and tribes and languages and peoples. Do you remember who that angel represents? That angel is you, as you go out and share the Gospel of Jesus with others. So, how did you do with that challenge this last week? Did you go somewhere you were unfamiliar, and did you pray and observe? Ultimately, did you share your hope in Jesus? Those of you who did, I would love to hear about it. But maybe others of you didn't. Maybe it just seemed too much of a stretch or out of your comfort zone. C.S. Lewis once said: *"It is because Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one... Aim at heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in.' Aim at earth and you will get neither."* We need to repent and have God adjust our vision if we are going to have an eternal impact in the lives of others.

This All Saints Sunday God gives us a glimpse of the result of our witnessing. ***"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7: 9 – 10)*** Awesome isn't it? Just imagine what waits in heaven for all who are called by faith to be children of God? In heaven we have a loving Father waiting for us with open arms, drawing us to Himself when we pass from this life.

Just picture it; a glorious day full of light. A gentle breeze glides over you. It's warm but not too warm. There are clouds above and green grass beneath your bare feet. You're walking in this field along the ocean and you see, running toward you, God the Father with His arms reaching out to you and He's calling your name! He grabs you and lifts you up. He hugs you so tightly, like your parents did when you were young, and He gently sways back and forth with you in His arms. Behind Him are all of your family in Christ to welcome you, to welcome you home. How does that picture feel? How does that scene touch you? Does it help you, as C.S. Lewis said, aim at heaven?

That picture gives me peace and a sense of comfort; a feeling that I no longer have anything to fear. There's nothing I need to hide about myself before God, because that image tells me that all of my worries and heartaches, along with my pride, are no

more. How I long to be there. Yet, I know that image is just a fraction of what it will be like to be in God's presence. Like John, I realize that being in the presence of God will be a more wonderful than anything I could ever grasp while bound to this earth.

[Fanny Crosby](#) wrote almost 8000 Gospel songs in her life. What makes that more amazing is that she'd been blind since she was 6 weeks old. But she wasn't bitter towards God. One minister sympathetically said, *"I think it's a great pity that our Master did not give you sight when He showered you with so many other great abilities."* She replied, *"I now believe that if at birth I had been able to make one petition of the Lord, it would have been that I should be born blind."* "Why?" he asked. *"Because, the first face that will ever gladden my heart...will be the face of my Savior when I get to heaven."* Crosby's faith enabled her to write hymns like, ["Blessed Assurance"](#), ["To God be the Glory"](#), and ["Tell Me the Story of Jesus"](#), all through the blessing of her blindness.

A few years ago I shared a song by Mercy Me called ["Homesick"](#). Bart Millard wrote the song following the deaths of nine people who were close to the band. The lyrics, if you remember, describe the sadness so many of us experience on this earth that point us to the joy of heaven to come. *"In Christ, there are no goodbyes And in Christ, there is no end. So I'll hold onto Jesus with all that I have, To see you again."*

Life is hard. It is so harsh. Death and suffering, division and hostility, prejudice and fear dominate every aspect of our lives in this world. But our destination is heaven, as Jesus describes in our Gospel. And that is why the elder tells John that there, ***"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."*** (Revelation 7: 16 – 17)

No one escapes the struggles and tribulations of life. It is just the reality of living in a world that is corrupted by that sin. John sees this great multitude that he can't even begin to count, from every nation, and all tribes and peoples and languages, and he's told that, ***"These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*** (Revelation 7: 14)

The blood of the Lamb is what has given the great multitude their needed righteousness to stand before God, and made them His children. And that is who you and

I are. We are God's children. We are the part of the multitude in heaven that cannot be numbered. We are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. We have the promise and the assurance that the Lamb is our shepherd and that all of the tears will be wiped away from our eyes. It's that image that gives us hope and a future. That's our destination.

In the meantime, we have to come back down to earth. We live on this earth believing all that God has promised to us in the scriptures. And if someone chooses not to live in hope of God's promises, how depressing and sad their life will be. If someone disregards God's gifts of grace through the blood of the Lamb, then as Luther says, ["Even God Himself cannot give heaven to the person who does not believe."](#) Hear then again God's promise on which we place our hope. ***"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."*** (1 John 3: 1 – 3)

Luther also said, ["Whoever does not direct and prepare his heart for yonder imperishable life, does not understand what \(our Christian faith\) is all about."](#) As God's children we are people of hope. People of the promise of eternal life. We know that all of our sins have been forgiven in Christ's blood, as He washed our robes and made them white in baptism. We have the guarantee of a resurrection, by His grace, through faith alone in God's word alone. Alleluia, Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed, Alleluia!*

In a few minutes, we're going to leave this place and go back out into the world, to our jobs and homes. And we will continue to try to be effective witnesses of our hope in Christ to others. So go reminded, that our hope doesn't come from anything we accomplish, but in what has been accomplished for us on the cross. We have a destination to keep our eyes focused and we have God's promises that we are eternally blessed. So our witness, our attitude, our love is rooted and guided by Christ. And maybe take a note from CS Lewis, who started us off today, that when we aim at heaven we get earth thrown in; all for the sake of the blood of the Lamb, Who is our salvation. Amen.