

HE PREPARES A PLACE
'HIS Story' SERIES - WEEK 4
Dan Burrell

Good morning Life Fellowship. Once again we gather in these extraordinary times via the Internet. Thank you so much for tuning in with us each week. Just as a way of an update I want to thank you so much for the wonderful feedback that we have been receiving from those of you who are watching, for sharing it with your friends, posting it on social media, having watch parties, and so forth. We are glad to get your responses, and we are glad to get the pictures from those of you who have sent them in, showing you sitting with your families. Please continue to send those to us at media@lifecharlotte.com, and we will post them as they are an encouragement to us.

A lot of the questions we have been getting are: *'What next? Where do we go from here?'* And we continue to wait for clear direction from the governor on when we are going to be allowed to meet again. There are obviously going to be some initial parameters around how we will be able to configure our meetings in the future. But once we know that information we will put together a plan and we will start announcing it through social media, and our website, with video updates and so on. So until then we are just going to continue preaching and teaching the way that we have been through our Sunday morning broadcasts, through our Life Groups that are meeting via Zoom, and through Bible training that goes on throughout the week. If you are interested in being a part of a Life Group you can contact Brad Milks at bmilks@lifecharlotte.com and he will get you enrolled. We have Life University classes going on online and we have all kinds of things that are happening. We have teams of people that are praying, as well as teams of people that are supporting those who are experiencing needs. So the work of Life Fellowship is continuing full bore during this crisis.

Thank you by the way for your generosity in giving. We are seeing a lot of extra giving come in for benevolence and for the needs we have there. We are working real hard to be able to take care of all of our staff during this staff. Some have asked is we have been able to take care of our team, and yes, we are doing that because of your faithfulness in giving. In the midst of unusual circumstances God is still blessing. We had someone trust Christ last week, and we have folks that are growing in their walk and in their faith. So what Satan may mean for evil we know that God is using for good, and we are just thankful for your ongoing prayers, and for your support for Life Fellowship.

So this morning we are again back to our series on HIS Story - history - the grand narrative that God put in place that helps us in a nutshell see the big events of human history as God created us. If you are one of the kids watching this morning, or if you are a teenager, or maybe you are a new Christian, what we are doing is also kind of giving you some Theology 101. If you go to seminary or to a Bible college, one of the first things you are going to be taught is this principle of God's grand narrative and the four parts to it.

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The first Sunday in April we looked at creation; the second Sunday, which was Easter Sunday, we looked at the fall. Last Sunday Pastor Ben reminded us of the wonder of the gospel which was redemption through our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Today we come to the fourth one and that is restoration. So let's make sure we have all four of those, which are - creation, fall, redemption and restoration. Creation - fall - redemption - restoration.

Now if I were a parent with kids still living at home one of the things I would want to know is if my kids have been listening and learning from this. In fact I would probably offer them a special treat, or a special prize of some kind, if I could ask them spontaneously any time today to name the four parts of God's grand narrative, the four parts of HIS Story. And if they could say to me - creation, fall, redemption, restoration, they would get that prize. I am not saying you have to do that, but I am saying your kids are going to be really disappointed if you don't do it. So why don't you do that? In fact you can practice with your family and ask yourself that question, because if you do answer it - congratulations! You have passed the first chapter of Theology 101, as we look at HIS Story, God's grand narrative which began with creation, fall, redemption and today we discuss the restoration.

Now this is exciting because for us as we have studied these things we realized the first three things we were looking back on, the first three things that we know that we find recorded in Scripture have happened in the past. By faith we accept the Scriptural record. By faith we understand God's handiwork in all of this. But on this point, which is restoration, we are looking into the future. We are looking ahead.

You know John Chapter 14 and verses 1 through 6 contain one of my very favorite passages. In fact it is one of the passages my parents asked me to memorize when I was just a young child. And to this day I still have it memorized. Now I memorized it in the King James Version, and we use the ESV at Life Fellowship, so the words are a little bit different. I am going to read it to you this morning from the ESV which is a little different, but I think this is one of the most exciting, positive, and encouraging passages in Scripture.

Jesus is talking to His disciples and they are a little freaked out, they are a little confused. *'What is going on here, Jesus? You are saying these things about you are not always going to be here forever, and there are some things that are happening that we are not sure about.'* Thomas in particular, is kind of coming unglued, and he is challenging and questioning things. So Jesus calls them all together and He says these words to them in John Chapter 14 beginning in verse 1:

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“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, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going. Thomas,” who was the big doubter, said to Him, *“Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”* Jesus said to him, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

You know one of the things I really like about studying Christ and all the different things that He did is that you start seeing insights into His character and into His nature that help us to connect to the humanity of Christ in the midst of His deity. And we learned about the deity of Christ in the midst of His humanity. As we look at the nature and character of Christ, I don’t know if there is a passage that gives us more insight into how He views His creation than this passage, and throughout His life in the New Testament.

Here is what I love about Christ. He is constantly giving us reassurance. He is saying, *‘I am enough. I will meet your needs. I will be there for you. Hungry, I will give you food. Thirsty, I will give you water. Hurting, I will heal you. Lost, I will find you. Confused, I will give you direction. Being accused or attacked, let me be your advocate. Experiencing doubt, let me give you hope.’*

So whether you were a lost sheep, or a lost coin, or a crippled man, or a woman taken in adultery, or doubting Thomas, or the woman at the well, or someone who was sitting on the side of the mountain listening to Him speak, Jesus was always saying, *‘I am enough to take care of all of your needs, both physical and spiritual.’* And in doing that Christ said, *‘Be safe, be sure, be secure. I am there for you.’*

Then I want us to note what this passage says. Here we have Thomas and the disciples. They are just young guys, and they are flipping out a little bit. They are a little nervous, they are a little confused, and Jesus picked up on that. He told them, *‘Guys, calm down. Don’t get all worked up. Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Look, you believe in God, believe in me. In my Father’s house there are many rooms, many dwelling places.’*

You know we have kind of emotionalized this term, as the King James Version actually says mansions, and so immediately we start thinking Palm Beach mansions, or mansions on Lake Norman, or the Beverly Hillbilly mansion, or whatever. But it is just basically saying, *‘I have a place for you. I have a room at the Inn for you. I have a place where I will take care of you. And by the way, if I go away, you can know one thing for*

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sure, and that is I am going to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you, I am coming back.'

And folks, that is part of the restoration. It is the coming back of Christ. It is the fixing of all things broken. It is the ultimate security. It is our blessed hope. It is that thing which God sent Jesus to accomplish in us through the redemption, and that because of the redemption now provides us the hope of a restored universe, of a restored physical being, of a restored spiritual relationship with God, of a restoration of all that was broken in creation. And that is the final note of the song, it is the final chapter of the book, it is the final story of HIS Story - the restoration.

And He said, *'I am the way, the truth and the life. Through me you will be with me. And if I am going, I am coming back. And if I am coming back it is because I have completed the preparation for your arrival.'* The bride of Christ, the marriage of the Lamb is what the Scripture calls it.

So when you see these things, man, they ought to be an encouragement to us, because aren't we always looking for hope, aren't we looking for that conclusion, aren't we always looking for those things that will end up good? And so for us as believers when we are looking at the grand narrative, as we are reading the stories, we realize we are three quarters of the way through the book. We saw the story of creation and how God created us perfectly. We saw the story of the fall, how we messed it up and marred the creation and brought upon us condemnation and damnation.

Then we saw the emergence and clarity of God's love where He said, *'I will pay whatever price it takes so that you can be restored to me.'* And so through the redemption, the price of our sin was paid at Calvary with the victory on Easter morning of the resurrection. That was the surety that God is powerful enough to redeem us and save us and keep us. And so now three quarters of the way through the story He says in this last chapter that we are going to love this because it is awesome.

Now I know that probably some of you were expecting this week to have this grand sermon on Bible prophecy. In theological terms by the way, the doctrine of end times, or the study of the end times is called eschatology. So if you hear someone talking about eschatology, they are talking about what the book of Revelations really means. When we see the prophetic passages like in Daniel, and some places in Isaiah and Jeremiah, we wonder what those things mean for us in the future. And there is kind of a subset of Christianity that love prophecy, they love the end time study, and they love eschatology.

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So whether you are a dispensationalist or a covenant theologian, or reformed, whether you are premillennial, post millennial, omni millennial or mid millennial, whether you are pre-rapture, or you believe in a rapture or not, all of these different things you may be thinking, *'All right, this is where Pastor Dan is going to get down and answer all these questions.'* But you are going to be disappointed, because I am not going to get into all of that. There are many, many books that you can read and study, and there are prophesy conferences that are a dime a dozen that are fun to talk about.

And I like to joke and say, *'I am a pan millennialist.'* And you will ask, *'What is a pan millennialist?'* And my response is, *'I just believe it is all going to pan out in the end.'* Now I do have some pretty clear beliefs, and if you want to discuss those with me sometime when things re-open, we can go have a diet Root Beer and a sandwich and we can tell each other what we think. But in the end I know this - God is a planner, and He has a plan for us. And Jesus made a promise, and here is what I love about this passage, He says, ***"I go to prepare a place."***

And I want those words to be driven in your heart today, to give you peace, comfort and surety. He prepares a place for you. He prepares a place for you and for me and for all of those who have experienced the power of the redemption. Created, fallen and redeemed, we shall be restored by Christ. And in that we have wonderful security provided to us, and we can also have a sense of anticipation that will inspire us and drive us to be faithful during these days.

Every story has a conclusion, and the story of God's story - HIS Story - history - is a humdinger. And as we look at these passages in just a moment we will realize that we are in the midst of it, we are in the thick of it, of the best that is yet to come. And God in His graciousness, God in His consistency with His character, has patiently given us just a little glimpse of the outcome, so that we can again have hope, direction, and comfort. Inasmuch as Jesus said to His disciples, *'Don't be troubled, don't be freaked out, don't have a heart attack,'* here is what God is saying to us in the middle of a pandemic, in the middle of an economic downturn, in the middle of whatever crisis may be going on in our lives: *'He prepares a place for us.'* And that ought to give us amazing security.

You know many of us quite frankly have been a little encouraged by some signs this week that maybe we are over the hump as it relates to the pandemic. And now we are seeing some of our neighboring states saying, *'Okay, we are going to start easing the restrictions.'* So two or three times every day I am checking the news trying to figure out when we are going to get back to some kind of normalcy, and to be able to come together again as a church family. I miss you guys! Pastor Ben and I were talking about it last

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week and how good it is going to be to see everyone again on our first Sunday back. I don't think we are going to be allowed to hug each other, but we are going to be doing a lot of the virtual six foot social distancing hugging for sure. We are looking forward to seeing you again!

And there is a little aspirational hope that is kind of coming together as we look to the future. Now we are starting to ask questions like, *'What do we need to do? What will the future look like? How can we capitalize on this moment for the sake of the gospel?'* And the fact that we are anticipating that, and now living without hope in this moment, ought to cause us to pause and reflect on how we are living our normal lives.

In some ways I think we could have an indictment on our own faith, and in our own faith walk. Have we grown so accustomed to life on this earth, and life as it is in 2020, just thinking of our own current state, our desire for creature comforts and the best experiences that we think we can possibly have now? Because if our focus is so exclusively on that, our hopes, our comforts, our priorities, it may reflect a mentality that says, *'You know, this is as good as it gets. Live in the moment. Go for it now. Just be you. Experience is where it is at. You can have your best life now.'* And if that is our mentality, then I would say that is an indictment on our faith. It is an indictment on our attitude about what we believe about the Bible.

You know many of us have at some point experienced the thrill of moving into a new home. I was trying to think about this the other day, and I think over the course of thirty five years of marriage my wife and I have lived in seven or eight different homes. We started off in a little apartment that we rented. Then we bought our first little townhouse. Then we rented kind of a junky house, until we could afford to buy our first home that was kind of in the country. And we liked living there, but then we moved here to Charlotte where we lived in a church provided house. During that time we bought a little real estate investment house to rent out while we were living in the church house.

Then something kind of went haywire, so we left the church housing and we moved into this cramped little rental house that we had bought for an investment. I began working in Miami after that flying back and forth from there to Charlotte. Four days a week I stayed in Miami in a studio apartment, and then the other three days we lived in this cramped little rental house. Then I had an offer for a job in South Florida that I thought was the perfect answer. I didn't know it at the time but the Lord was in the process of teaching me a lesson and it was a big lesson.

So we were back in the market for a house in South Florida. This was about the time when there had been a dip in the housing market, so we were able to get a house that a few months before would have been way out of our price bracket. But I thought with

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my new job and a great financial package this house would be possible because it was the house of our dreams. This lovely house had beautiful palm trees and it was on the water. It had a media room, a suite for in-laws, and a three car garage. I can remember that this house became something I fixated and focused on. I was so excited when we loaded up that moving truck and we moved into this big house, which had previously been owned by a Christian contemporary singer who had made it big. I thought we had got this house for a rock bottom price so we were so excited. And that house was my focus and attention.

And then after about a year all of a sudden I found out that my job and the financial package was all an illusion. This was 2008 when the market on housing suddenly dropped, and I could no longer afford this house. So I ended up having to sell the house at a huge loss. And that is when I finally realized, *'Lord, you are teaching me all kinds of lessons in the middle of this.'* My focus had been on stuff, houses and where I lived, and now all of a sudden it was gone. And I wasn't prepared for the future like I thought I was.

And you know that is the situation where many people are today, where they think it is all about today, they feel safe with their degrees, their 401ks, their retirement accounts, and their jobs. And now we have kind of found out over the last six weeks or so in this pandemic that, *'Whoa, just like that, the world changed.'* And we didn't even see it coming. So what do we do with that? What do we learn?

I think what we ought to learn first of all is: ***"Let not your hearts be troubled."*** Do you believe in God? Do you believe in His Son? And do you believe in His promises? Because here is what the message of the restoration is - ***"He prepares a place for us."*** And if our focus is on our citizenship here, our possessions here, our wealth here, our health here, our status here, then our focus is in the wrong place. This is not the best there is. This is not all we can experience. This is not everything that we may have envisioned or dreamed that it could be. God tells us, *'Hang on, regain your focus. If I am going, I am preparing, and if I am preparing I am coming back for you.'* That is the message of the restoration. Things are going to get better and they are going to be better than you ever imagined.

And this has been the story of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament that God since the founding of the earth has had a plan for us to be with Him. And nothing that Satan has been able to throw at Him has been able to prevent that from happening. Isaiah Chapter 65 and verses 17 through 19 tell the prophetic words of the prophet Isaiah as he said: ***"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice"***

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forever in that which I create; for behold I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress."

He was saying there was coming a city by the name of Jerusalem, and He was going to restore all the brokenness of Israel and His beloved, and there will be hope again. And we see that hope in Revelations. So let's look at Revelations Chapter 21. I would urge you this week to read Revelations Chapters 21 and 22 particularly if you want to get an expanded view of what it is going to look like in the future, what the gospel is bringing toward, and what Jesus was talking about when He said, "*I prepare a place.*"

Let's look at the first four verses of Revelations chapter 21 where 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. 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."*

Now this is just the beginning of the description of what the new heaven and the new earth will look like, but in this God is giving us just a little peek into what Jesus meant when He said, '*Look, if I go away, I am going for a purpose and that is to prepare a place for you. And if I go I am coming back, and one day we are all going to be together in this perfect spot, in this new creation, in this place I prepared for you.*'

I want to do kind of a comparison now with the old creation and the new creation, with the fallen creation that God originally created perfect, but which was marred and broken by our sin, and that which God has promised us in terms of a restored creation. In Genesis Chapter 1 and verse 1 we have heaven and earth, and in Revelations Chapter 21 verse 1 we see what we just read about which was a new heaven and a new earth. Now the word that is translated here 'new' is not just new chronologically but it is new qualitatively, as in 'new and improved.'

And why is it improved? It is because this one will be restored and will be even better than the one that we have right now. It will be perfect. It will not have the problems that we have now so it will be even better. An old preacher once said this and I appreciated it because it may me rethink how I viewed this. He said, '*If God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit made the earth that we have experienced now in six days with all the beauty and wonder there is, and now He has been back preparing a place for us*

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for 2,000 years since the resurrection - can you imagine how amazing that place must be. And I believe that Scripture tells us over and over again that there is no way for John to have recorded the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in such a way for you and I to even be able to get our arms around, or our minds around how wonderful the new Heaven, the new earth and the new Jerusalem are going to be.

So we see in Genesis the old heavens and the earth, and in Revelations we have the new heavens and the earth. In Chapter 1 of Genesis and verse 16 we know that there was a sun that was created for light. We know though, according to Revelations Chapter 21 and verse 23 that there is no sun in Heaven, but that God provides the illumination. In Him is light, no darkness at all, He provides all the light we need in the new Heaven.

We know also that there was night, according to Genesis Chapter 1 and verse 10, originally in our creation. And we know that the new and improved version of creation will have no night, according to Revelations Chapter 22 and verse 5. We know that we are a water based creation. In the Old Testament in Genesis Chapter 1 and verse 10 God created the seas. Three quarters of our planet is covered with water. We know in the New Testament though, according to Revelations Chapter 21 and verse 1, which we just read, there will be no more seas. So if you are a beach person, you are not going to miss the beach, but you need to understand we are not going to have oceans. There won't be a water based need for life to be sustained then, because our life will come directly from God, so there will be no seas.

We know that the curse occurred in Genesis Chapter 3 verses 14 through 17, and we fell, we were broken, we were marred. In Chapter 22 and verse 3 of Revelations we see there will be no more curse, as the curse will be damned and sent away forever. We know that there was death because of the fall in Genesis Chapter 3 and verse 19. And we know according to Revelations Chapter 21 and verse 4 there will be no more death.

We know that man was driven from Paradise in Genesis Chapter 3 and verse 24; he was kicked out of the Garden and expelled. But we know in Revelations Chapter 22 and verse 14 the Scripture says that we will enter into this new Paradise, this new city, this new dwelling place of God, this new Heaven, this new earth. We know that sorrow and pain came as a result of the fall found in Genesis Chapter 3 and verse 27, but we see in Revelations Chapter 21 and verse 4 that the sweat, pain, sorrow, sickness and death are destroyed and non-existent in the new heaven and the new earth.

So there we have the contrasts. The contrasts between the old creation and the new creation, the broken creation and the restored creation that awaits us as the final part of God's grand narrative of His story. So what happens during the restoration? There are two things I want us to focus on. The first thing is this - God is going to introduce to us a

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new heaven, a new earth and a new Jerusalem. There are three parts to what we see in Revelations - a new heaven, a new earth and a new Jerusalem.

Why was this necessary? It is because the old earth had to be purged, it had to be destroyed. God was not going to tolerate indefinitely the existence of sin in His creation. This period of time in which His story is occurring is a picture of God's mercy and grace so that during this time we could be redeemed, we could be restored to Him. During this time Christ our Savior paid the price for our sins, so we could be with God for all eternity.

We know that the remnants of the fall and sin and all that was broken are going to be destroyed. We don't know whether this will be a totally new earth, or a renewed earth, because the word 'new' means 'new in character' and 'new in quality,' not necessarily new in existence. But we know that our new home will not be as dependent on water, and it will not be as dependent upon the sun or the moon as our current earth is, because God is going to be what drives everything personally then.

We know that Scripture tells us there is going to be a new capital city, and it will be the new Jerusalem. We see the picture of it literally being the dwelling place of God, where He says, "***I will dwell with my people and they will dwell with me.***" We know that in the Old Testament tabernacle there was a giant curtain in the temple that separated the people from God. Now we experience our relationship with God in a unique way, because He lives within us, but in the days of the restored kingdom we will see Him face to face. We will know Him as He is known. The Scripture tells us that He will dwell with us and we will dwell with Him. It is a picture of the unity that comes in a marriage between a bride and a groom, and we will have that relationship with God.

You know one of the best descriptions of this passage is something I just love, and I want to call your attention to it, because there are two phrases that jumped out at me as I was studying for this. The first one is '*He prepares a place,*' and the other one is '*no more.*' There will be no more sin, no more pain, no more tears, no more sorrow, no more death, no more discouragement, no more violence, no more sickness, no more hatred, no more war, no more anger, no more lies, no more deceit, no more addictions, and no more conflict. All those things that were interjected into our civilization, into our lives, and into our very souls by the fall are now going to be 'no more.'

Maybe you are wondering, '*Is God going to literally make it where we can't cry, or feel things.*' Here is the deal - He is removing all the things that make us cry. He is removing all the things that cause us pain. And those things will not be existence any longer. What makes us cry? It is tragedies, pain, sickness, death and disappointments, all

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those things that make us break down and weep. We won't have to worry about crying in Heaven because we are not going to have those things there in the restored creation.

The second thing I want us to look at is this. God's people are going to occupy the new creation. This is not for everyone. You know there is a saying, '*You know we are all God's children.*' But no, we are not. In fact the Bible says that some of us are sons of God and some of us are sons of Satan. We are all creations of God, but the fact is sin has moved us away, it has separated us from God, and our allegiance as fallen and broken under condemnation was to Satan. But when we receive forgiveness the Bible says that we are adopted, grafted, brought into God's family as joint heirs with Jesus.

And so the imagery of the Scripture here is so wonderful because it reminds us that we view Him as our Heavenly Father and He views us as His children for whom Christ died. And we then are the family of God. There are different names that we sometimes use - we are called 'the redeemed,' we are called 'the bride of Christ,' we are called 'the church, the called out assembly,' and we are called 'the body of Christ.' Whatever name you choose to affiliate with you need understand that this is God's way of identifying us as His. When He prepares a place for us, He is preparing a place for those He loved so much He was willing to die for them.

Have you ever prepared for a big event where you are going to have honored guests, or your family is coming? I know when my mom comes to visit us we go through all kinds of things in preparation. We clean the house, and sometimes we buy new pillows, or a bedspread. We want everything to be just right, because we love my mom. And anytime she comes to visit us it is a special time and we don't want to hold anything back. We clear our schedules so we can make her visit a priority.

Can you imagine what awaits us as believers from God who has been waiting for us since the fall? '*Here comes my family. Here comes my bride. Here comes my church. Here comes my redeemed. Here come my chosen ones. Here they come!*' He has prepared a place. Folks, that ought to give us hope. The focus doesn't have to be today. The focus doesn't have to be on what we have or don't have. The focus doesn't have to be on the pain that we are experiencing at this time during the pandemic, or the uncertainty that it causes.

Let's lift up our eyes and look ahead to that last chapter in His story and that last chapter is victory, completion, redemption, restored. That is the end of the story. That is the final chapter. It ends on the best note of any story we could ever imagine. And this place that He is preparing will be filled with believers past, present and future who abandoned self and trusted in Christ, who rejected the lies of Satan, and trusted the promises of God, who exchanged temporal values and desires and impulses and drives

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that focused on self for eternal ones being focused on God and truth and holiness and righteousness.

So what do we do with this? If we are looking at the grand narrative, if we are looking at the final chapter, and if we are looking at where we are today, there are three things that I think we should be doing. Number one - refuse to live in the past and don't be distracted by the present, but focus on the future. There is an old gospel song that we used to sing, *'This world is not my home, I am just a passing through; my treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue. The angels beckon me to heaven's open shore, and I don't feel at home in this world anymore.'*

Now that is kind of a klutzy old country song that we used to sing when I was growing up, but let me just tell you this - it embodies the hope that we have because this world is not our home, so we shouldn't feel at home here. We should feel like an alien. We should feel like a stranger here. We should feel like we don't fit in here, because this isn't where we are going to spend eternity. This isn't the last chapter. This isn't the best that will ever be. For the person who is on their way to hell this morning, who does not know Christ, who has not trusted Him as Savior, then they ought to be in despair because this is the best it is going to get, and this stinks, and there ought not be hope in their heart.

But if you have trusted Christ as your Savior, if you have invited Him to forgive you of your sins, and you are trusting in Him alone for salvation, if you have repented of your ability to save yourself and all the wicked things you have ever done, and are confident in your relationship with Him, then you this morning can have hope. It doesn't matter what is going on around us, it doesn't matter what happens to our wealth or our bank accounts, or our jobs, or our house, or anything else, because the best is yet to come. And we need to focus on that. We need to get our strength, and our motivation from that. Get our hope from that because Heaven awaits. He prepares a place, and He prepares it for you and for me.

The second thing is this - do not let Satan twist the content, or the consequences of the gospel. Do not let Satan twist the consequences of the fall of man, or the content of the gospel, because here are the facts: Satan has always been a liar. He has always told us we can't trust God, and that is how we got in this mess when he said to Adam and Eve: *'Oh God didn't really say that. He is just holding something good back from you. He didn't really say this.'* Satan has always tried to convince us that God doesn't fulfill His promises, that God isn't worthy of our trust, and that is what got us into the whole mess, that is what brought about the fall from a perfect creation.

And Satan hasn't become less of a liar since then; in fact he has become a better liar because he has had a lot of years of practice. And Satan wants you to be discouraged

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today. He wants you to think there is no hope, he wants you to think that God is not real, that salvation is an illusion, that all of this is all that we are ever going to experience. And he wants you to think that when you die you go to sleep, or you come back as another creature. So folks, you are going to have faith. You are going to have faith in something, either in Satan's lies or in God's revealed Word. You have to have faith in something.

And let me tell you this - I believe the Holy Spirit will take you through this book, through this Bible, as you look at this big story of creation, the fall, redemption and restoration, and He will lead you to that point where you will say, *'This is truth. And I need that. And I am placing my faith and trust in Christ. I am asking for forgiveness of my sins, and I am looking for that home that He has and is preparing for me right now.'*

The third thing is this - be comforted by the reality that He prepares a place for you. One of the wonderful things about our faith, about Christianity is that it is personal. Jesus was a personal Savior. He took the time to talk to the woman at the well. He said to let the little children come to Him, to sit around His knee, so He could talk to them. He talked about sheep, coins, bread and water. He looked at the crippled and had compassion. He looked at the weeping and wanted to dry their tears. He looked at the broken and restored them. And He looks at us and He says, *'I prepare a place for you. I have hope. I have comfort.'*

Maybe your life is falling apart right now, maybe your relationships are on life support, maybe you do not know whether you have a job waiting you at the end of this, or maybe you have already been notified you have lost your job, maybe you are waiting for that relief check or that unemployment approval, and your world seems dark. Maybe you have found solace in a bottle or in a needle, maybe you have been spending time with your covers pulled up over your head waiting for this to end, asking yourself, *'Why is life even worth living at all?'*

If this is you, I have a great message for you this morning. It is not my story; it is His story. It is the story of a God who created an earth that fell, that He redeemed and that He will restore. And we live in that part of the book right now where Jesus is saying, *'I prepare a place for you. Come unto me all you who are weary, heavy laden, overburdened, discouraged, distressed, broken down, addicted and hurting. Come unto me, and I will give you rest and hope and a place that I have prepared for you.'* This is His story, a story of love, a story of hope, a story of reconciliation and redemption. And it is a story written just for you. Will you receive Him?

I am going to invite you right where you are sitting in front of your computer, or your television, to bow your head and close your eyes. And just think about where you

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are now, and what your future may look like. If you know Christ as your Savior I want you to think about Heaven. I want you to think about that new city, that new Jerusalem, that new heaven and that new earth. And to put your focus and attention and hope on that.

This morning if you would say, *'Dan, I have to tell you that I just don't know. I thought it was about being good, like God has some kind of big scale that He is going to weigh our good things and our bad things on, and I am just hoping that I have enough good things to make it.'* Maybe you are counting on being baptized. Or maybe you are counting on the fact that you try to go to church on the big days, like Easter and Christmas. But you just don't know where you are going when you die.

If that is you this morning, then may I invite you to take what you have heard today, and in faith, the faith that even a child could have, and say: *'Father, as best as I know how please forgive me of my sins. I trust you, I repent of my sins. I am sorry, I am broken, and I am turning to you, and today I am asking you to save me, to forgive my sins, to take me to Heaven when I die, and to give me hope again.'*

If you will do that the Bible says, ***"For whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*** The Bible says, ***"If you will confess your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved"*** The Bible says, ***"For by grace you have been saved through faith, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."*** The Bible tells us that all we have to do is repent and believe, trust in Him, because we cannot save ourselves. If you will pray that prayer the best you know how, that God will restore you, renew you, adopt you into His family, He will baptize you into His bride. And today I want you to know those words that Jesus said to His disciples, ***"I go to prepare a place for you,"*** will also apply to you.

If you have trusted Christ as your Savior today, here is what I want you to do. I want you to go to your computer right now, and I want you to type an email to media@lifecharlotte.com and say this: *'I trusted Christ today. I need more information.'* Then tell us how to get in touch with you. We have a Bible and some other information that we want to give to you. Someone will give you a quick call so we can know how to get it to you. And I want you to know this - today is the best day you will ever experience this side of Heaven, because today is the day when it became real that He prepares a place for you. Your restoration is coming. That is HIS Story, let's all live like it this week. God bless you all!

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The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.