

## **In My Father's House**

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Good morning everybody.

It is awesomely good to be here this morning. That is a big word. But it is awesomely good to be here together this morning. We have an amazing congregation. We are really blessed.

So, let me ask a question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" We ask our kids that. Do you know what? I think it frustrates them.

"I'm only 17 years old. How do I know what I want to be?" There are people that are 30 and 40 and 50 years old that are still asking the question.

What do you want to be when you grow up? What do I want to be when I grow up? We ask that of ourselves and of one another.

I think, maybe, a more important question to ask is, "What kind of a man or woman do you want to be?" "How do you want to mature spiritually?" "HOW do you want to be when you grow up spiritually?"

An even more important question is "WHERE, do you want to be when you grow up?" IN HEAVEN, that's where. That is where I want to be. That is where you want to be.

We someday want to be in My Father's House.

And that's the title of our lesson this morning, "In My Father's House."

Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many mansions."

A writer once asked, with a bit of artistic license ...

"Why a mansion, when maybe a small modest shack would do?" And then she said, "it's the same reason as why birds have a song or mountains have majestic peaks."

“Why are there stripes on a zebra? Why is there a smile on a golden lab's face? Why wrap creation is such splendor? Why did God go to such trouble to give us such special gifts? But don't we do the same? Don't you and I do the same? We do it so the heart will stop.”

“We do it to hear the joy of disbelief. ‘You did this for me?’ Not to build US up, but to build up the recipient. We search for just the right gift to show just how much we love and care for that one.”

And this is a big part of why God did it.

He gave his Son on the cross. As our hymn says, “For me; He died for me.”

It is why heaven is full of mansions prepared for His children.

This is the first of a few lessons on this theme.

We are exposed to so much “stuff.” I like to have a TV going in the background, and to have a light glowing from it. But there's so much demoralizing stuff coming into our lives today.

It is just so frustrating. The trashiness, the wars, the infighting. The extremes crowding out normal folks, as if there is such a thing as a “normal folk.”

The anxiety, the edginess, the fear, sometimes the sleeplessness. Why can't we go to sleep at night? It is because all of this stuff rattling around in our heads.

You know, fear is very overwhelming. You might say, “I'm not afraid.” Yet we fear so many things, even subconsciously.

We look at the fear on the faces of the children in Israel and in Palestine. We see the overwhelming fear on their faces.

We see fear in the eyes of pets in rescue shelters.

I think that making someone afraid, is one of the greatest sins of all time. To make someone afraid. It is just a horrible thing to be afraid.

The leadership of our country wants us to think that there is nothing higher than our own private biases and our own private desires. And that somehow, we can fight it out to success with that narrow mindset. But it has never ever worked that way and it never will. That is fear mongering.

We need something higher than ourselves to dream about. Something higher and nobler than ourselves to aspire to, to pull us together.

That is why we need the hopes and dreams of living forever in Heaven in my Father's house. Beyond all fear.

It makes me think about the Bible characters we have studied recently. I think about the women from the pagan world that were pulled into the lineage of Christ.

How about the misfits? The men and women with complicated lives that God called and who answered, "Here am I, Lord, send me." God has called many such "misfits" into His plan of salvation.

Wouldn't it have been simpler or cleaner, to just use normal folks?" But wait! Who is normal, right?" I mean folks who are not so troubled or mixed up. You know what I mean? Why not just somebody who is smooth and calm. And why does God bother to tell us of their stories?

I think he is telling us, he's showing us, that he stays calm when the world goes wild. He stays calm because he has already planned for our care. He has got it all under control.

Be at peace. Look towards heaven.

I know Pamela had told Connie and Pam when they visited her that she likes to go to her happy place when she is troubled.

So, let's go to our happy place. Let's set our minds on the things above.

Let us read in Colossians chapter three verses one through four. If you would like to follow along, please do.

Colossians three verses one through four.

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above."

Now this follows the previous chapter talking about baptism.

And so, Paul is saying, “if then you were raised up from the waters of baptism, or since you were raised up from the waters of baptism, ... “

Now here is a spoiler alert. Heaven can never be your home without baptism.

I want to say that right up front. Heaven can never be your home without baptism.

Paul says, “if then you are raised with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.”

“Seek those things which are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on things of the earth. For you have died (died to your old life in baptism) ... for you have died and your new life is hidden with Christ in God.” It is secure with Christ in God.

In baptism, you become a child of God. God becomes your Father. He was not before, but in baptism, rising up, God becomes your Father.

And Jesus said, “In My Father's house.” As a Christian, you can call Heaven, “My Father's House.” I can call Heaven “My Father's House. In Heaven we can live forever.

Back to Colossians three. “When Christ who is our life appears (who is the center of our life appears), then we will also appear with Him in Glory.” Living forever.

So, in this lesson we are talking about being, on day, in my Father's house, God is my Father. God is your Father. His house is heaven.

In no way is this meant to place ourselves over Christ. Jesus referred to heaven as “His” Father's house. We are not trying to take his place. However, he has invited us to be adopted into the family of God through baptism.

So, I think we can say “our” Father's house as well. It is the same place we read of in John fourteen verses one through four.

Jesus said this. It is really calming. “Let not your hearts be troubled.” That should make the anxiety drain out of you like water running off a duck.

“Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me.”

Do you remember from our study of the angels on Wednesday night? What was one of the first things an angel said to somebody? "Don't be afraid. Do not be afraid."

Think about the time the angel came up and tapped Daniel on the shoulder. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I would've been here sooner to help you but I was working another problem."

"Don't be afraid," Jesus said. "Don't let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me."

"In my Father's house, are many mansions. If it were not true, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself. that where I am there you may also be."

It is like having a confirmed hotel reservation. Most all of us try to have a place to stay for the night when we travel. We make a reservation.

You know what it's like when you don't have one. Have you ever been in this position, not knowing where you're going to stay? It causes a lot of anxiety. And you're tired. It's getting dark, maybe raining or foggy, and you don't know where you are going to stay.

It is not a good feeling.

On the other hand, it is a great feeling to know that you have a room reserved for you.

There are few things more anxiety laden than not knowing whether you'll find a place to stay?

But we do have a reservation in our Father's house. This realization, this assurance, should drain all the anxiety out of us.

Now listen to what Jesus said. Listen carefully.

I have a place for "YOU." I would have told "YOU." I'm going to receive "YOU." That "YOU" may be there also.

YOU, YOU, YOU, YOU.

I told Connie that a possible title for this lesson would be “You Are You.” And I looked over and I didn't get the nod.”

You know how that is, right?

I don't know how many of you remember the movie, “Hunt for Red October,” where the commander of the Soviet attack submarine wanted to go faster and the engineer with a cigarette hanging out his mouth said, “105% on the reactor is possible but not recommended captain?”

So that's exactly the message I got from Connie. “It's possible but it's not recommended.”

So I didn't GO with it.

But what made me think of “You Are You?”

I suspect we have somewhat of a misperception about ourselves. Let me try to explain that.”

The Creation is incredible. Incredible. It shows quite beautifully the unmatched worth that we have in God's eyes.

God spoke everything into existence. It's mind blowing. Even before he created the sources of light, He said, “Let there be light.” And there was light. Just like that.

And then he went about forming galaxies and zebras and mountains and starfish. He spoke and they were created. Something out of nothing.

It might have been Kenneth that brought this up in class a couple of weeks ago. Hebrews chapter eleven verse three. God made something out of nothing.

Then he turned his creation to man, and maybe I'm making too fine a point out of this, but He didn't speak us into existence, formed us in his own image.

Genesis chapter two verse seven. “Then the Lord formed man from the dust of the ground.”

We've all made play people, haven't we? Out of clay or dirt or Play-Dough. But this is far, far from the special miracle that God worked. The things we formed were not living beings.

They were not in God's image with the ability to love and reason and exist forever, and choose between Heaven or Hell.

He made man out of the dust to the ground and then He breathed into us.

He breathed into us the breath of life. Genesis chapter two and verse seven, "and God breathed into his nostrils, the breath of life, and man became a living being."

Psalms chapter 139 verse four, "We are fearfully and wonderfully made."

One writer, again with a bit of artistic license, gives us a sense of how beautiful this is.

"Face to face, we inhale God's exhale. Our very first breath came from the very mouth of God. It's hard to fathom, isn't it? The breath of life? When our life is a mess or feels like it's a mess with no end in sight, it's easy to think of God as being far from us. But He's as close to us as He was to Adam in the beginning." It's just beautiful.

Now, the body that Adam had when God created him, the body that God made clothes to cover, the body that God provided food for, where's that body now? You can't answer that.

But where is Adam? I'll tell you one thing. Adam and his body are far from being together. No one knows where the remains of Adam's body are. But the Bible tells us where Adam is.

He didn't cease to exist. We know where Adam is.

When you came into this world, God, through his miraculous process of procreation, provided you a body.

I mean, you all are wearing that body today, aren't you? You may think of yourself as wearing clothes and that's true. But moreover, YOU are wearing your body.

God provided you a body. Actually, He loaned you a body. A body to borrow, so to speak. And why? Because you needed a body to live in this world, on this earth.

God didn't give you a body that fit you to live under water. He didn't give you a body to accomplish flight. He didn't give you one that would allow you to move about in outer space.

He gave you a body suited for the earthly existence, which he intended.

But you know, all human bodies wear out.

Think about your car. If you keep it long enough, your tires are going to wear out. You take those old tires and you throw them away. But your car is still your car. You just put on new tires, right?

Our bodies wear out. And when your body wears out, you are still you. Some bodies wear out faster while some bodies wear out slower. They all wear out.

But you are still you when that happens. You've got to leave this life. Why? Because you can't live in this life without that body.

Again, I said YOU. YOU have to leave this life. YOU are not able to live here anymore. You cannot live here without that body any more than you can live underwater or in outer space without a diving suit or a spacesuit.

Your body ends up in the grave in one form or another, in the ground or as ashes in an urn. But one way or another, the body returns to the dust from which it was formed.

But where are you? Where are you? Where is Jim? Where is Rusty? Where's Valerie? Where are you when that happens?

When that happens, you are in the place that the Bible simply calls "Hades."

Hades is a Greek word that has been borrowed. The word "Hades" has sort of an edge to it.

You would think maybe we need a smoother, more melodic, term.

Hades is the name of the unseen place God has provided for the "departed." We can't see it. We don't know where it is. Hades is the place where God takes you when your borrowed body no longer functions.

You can't live here anymore without your original body. And the promised time has not yet come when Christ will return to take you to heaven where He now is.

If you live faithfully, you got to be somewhere until then, right? And that place is Hades, the unseen abode of those who have departed this life.

You might call it a waiting room or a holding place until the end of earthly time. Yet, while true, it sounds kind of sterile. It falls way short of a good description. But that's all we have to go on.

We read in the Gospel of Luke chapter sixteen, the account of the rich man and Lazarus, We read how the poor man died and was carried away by angels to sit by the side of Abraham.

Think about that. The poor man died and he was, as it simply says, was carried away by angels to sit by the side of Abraham.

The text simply says Lazarus died and was carried away to be comforted with Abraham.

Lazarus was carried away.

Lazarus was taken to the special place to be with Abraham.

Why was Abraham in this special holding place? Well, his body gave out about 1500 years ago at that point. 1500 years earlier. And faithful Abraham had been there ever since awaiting Christ's return.

I suspect time is not we as we reckon it in Hades. It would be disrespectful to God's care to think the "faithful departed" are sitting around twiddling their fingers wondering what's going on.

I don't think that's even reasonable to think that way. The Bible says that God comforts them.

You think about that Abraham, Abraham had been in Hades for 1500 years and Lazarus goes to join him awaiting Christ's return.

This place, and we can only grasp the smallest part of it, is where all who have gone who have died since the beginning of time when their bodies gave out on them.

And if they've lived faithfully, they're awaiting the return of Christ and the final judgment in comfort.

It's not wrong to say that the soul of Lazarus is with the soul of Abraham, yet I think it's closer to the truth to say that Lazarus is with Abraham.

Your soul is the essence of your being. It never dies.

You never die.

I know I'm going to get a hassle from Jeff after this, but I was watching "Why Planes Crash" again, and a Boeing 747 was coming in with faulty landing gear.

And the tower did not ask, "How many people do you have onboard." Instead, the controller said, "How many souls are on board? And the pilot said, "225 souls, sir."

And I think that is about right.

225 unique individuals living in borrowed bodies who will exist for all of eternity.

If your life on earth were to end and you have been faithful to God, you would go to be with Abraham.

If any one of you right here, right now, were to come to the end of your life, and you have been faithful to God, you would go to be with Abraham. Your body would go back to the ground.

I am just using this as an example.

We often say Hades is a place where disembodied souls go at death.

It is not wrong, but let me ask, where did God tell Samuel to look when he was giving Jesse's sons the once over as he searched for the successor to King Saul? Where did God tell Samuel to look?

God said, "Don't look on the outside. Look on the inside."

He was saying, "Don't look at David's body, Look at David – he is on the inside. He is the one wearing the body. Where was David? He was in that borrowed body.

Hades is where God takes you when your body no longer supports you, takes YOU.

David is with Abraham and Lazarus and Enoch and Abel and Noah and on and on.

It is accurate to say that their souls are there because they and their soul are one and the same.

And all of this is a part of a series of sermons called in "My Father's House."

I am bringing all of this up this morning because these are things we need to know for our study of "My Father's house."

So, you might ask, why do we need to know these things?" It is easy if we think about it, if you live faithfully to God, you'll inherit a mansion in heaven.

If you live faithfully to God ... you will inherit a mansion in heaven.

The YOU that spent time in an earthly body; the YOU that, if faithful, will spend time comforted with God's faithful of all ages in that special waiting room; the YOU, that in the resurrection and judgment, will be given a new body fit for everlasting life in heaven; is the YOU that can live forever.

You, You, You, You are you and will be you forever.

John is John and will be John forever.

Carl is Carl and will be Carl forever.

A little girl was looking up to a star filled night sky. I was reading this somewhere.

She said, Daddy, if heaven is so pretty on the wrong side what is it like on the right side? Now you know what she meant. Since what I CAN see is so pretty, what about the part I CAN'T see?

We sing a hymn.

If my love for Christ grows weak, then I need to turn to the cross of Calvary.

I also think that if our love for Christ ever grows weak, we ought to fall in love with Heaven all over again. Thinking about what it is like. On the inside of my Father's house. Where we never shall die.

If you are rewarded with a home in your Father's house, you will live forever.

Forever.

Heaven is the home of God our Father. Heaven is the home of Christ our savior. Heaven is the home of the Holy Spirit who guides us through the gospel, through the written word.

One day, when Christ returns to take God's children home, it will be the home of the Godly men and women of all ages.

Jesus said in Matthew chapter eight verse eleven, "Many will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." This is when Christ returns.

Many will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, along with men and women like Abel and Enoch and Noah and Sarah.

Think about them all. Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Samson, David, Samuel, and Elijah.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Men and women like Stephen and Paul, John the Baptist, John, Peter. Tabitha, Priscilla, Lydia.

God has prepared a place in heaven for them all and countless others.

All the faithful men and women from the beginning of time, by name, are right now being comforted by God in that special waiting room, waiting for the return of Christ.

Their earthly bodies failed long ago and have returned to the dust from whence they came.

They are now waiting for the time when Christ will call them back to life. The Father will give them new bodies suitable for everlasting life in heaven.

No one will ever need an earthly body again for this earth and the creation that attended it will melt and pass away.

Our hope, yours and mine, is that we will live righteously such that when our life is over that we will find rest in God's special holding place until Christ returns.

If we die before Christ returns, our hope is that we live faithfully so that we can be in that special holding place with Abraham.

Heaven will be the home of precious little children whose earthly bodies fail before they reach that age of responsibility. These little ones will find rest with God in that special waiting room with Abraham. The little ones who passed away before they ever knew right or wrong. They are with Abraham. That is comforting.

Do you remember when David was in turmoil over his son, from the union of he and Bathsheba, who was ill and finally died? David said, "He can't come back to me, but I can go to him."

Think about that. "He can't come back to me, but I can go to him."

Many Christians have said at the loss of a child or of a faithful loved one, a mom, a dad, a husband or a wife, "I have to work hard because I want to be with them again."

That is our hope. Heaven is a place of untold happiness.

It is a place where all will worship in the presence of God and the lamb. Think about that.

No more aging, no more disabilities, no more aches and pains, no more injury or illness.

No more death or sorrow, no more fear.

Heaven is a place where we will sing a new song.

The Song of the Redeemed Heaven is said to be the place of our dreams. Let me say more about that.

While we can certainly dream of heaven. It is much more than a dream. It is a place where God fulfills our dreams of Heaven and fulfills his promises.

Heaven is a home of rest for the weary.

Think about Jesus saying, "Come unto me all you that labor and heavy laden, I will give you rest.

No more separation, no more sinful people.

No more, no more, no more, no more, no more ... forever.

There is an old song. Maybe you have heard it. All I remember is this line, "Everybody talking about heaven ain't going there."

Do you remember that one? Everybody talking about heaven ain't going there?"

It cannot be much truer than that can it? Jesus also said in the remainder of Matthew chapter eight verse eleven, but there will be some who reject him and "will not sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob."

They will be cast into outer darkness, away from God forever.

Second Peter chapter three verses 10 through 11 says, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise and the elements will melt with fervent heat. Both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved what manner of persons ought you to be in conduct and godliness and holiness?"

You are now you. You are in an earthly body which will someday fail.

Please faithfully so that you can wait alongside Abraham when your body wears out. And so that when Christ returns, you'll be brought back to this life and given a new body. And then you can be in heaven with all the faithful forever.

Please live your life that way.

We are going to extend the invitation of Christ now as I close our lesson. I thank you for your kind attention.

If you are not a child of God please become one in baptism today so that you live in "My Father's House"

If you are an erring child of God having drifted away, please repent and pray for forgiveness this very day.

If we can assist you in either of these two important steps, let us know by coming forward and occupying the front seat while we sing this song.

Brother Jeff, please lead us in this song of encouragement.

Thank you very much.