My Heavenly Home – An Eternal Hello
November 30, 2025

This morning we wrap up our sermon series called, My Heavenly Home. In past weeks we've discussed how heaven is a real place. How heaven is a new start. How heaven is reached by God's grace through faith in Jesus and that, because of God's grace, it's a place that even sinners like you and I get to enter because of Jesus' death and resurrection. Consequently, it's a home to anticipate. This morning we will consider how heaven is an eternal hello. Our sermon focus verses are: (Revelation 7:9-10) After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." (Revelation 7:12) "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

About a dozen summers ago, my parents celebrated their 50th Anniversary. To help them celebrate, all 5 of their children and their entire families gathered at my parents' home in Sebewaing. It was the first time we were all together in almost 10 years. It was a precious, precious time. Some (like our youngest son, Cody) had been born since we were last together, so some relatives met one another for the first time. And all of us got acquainted or reacquainted with one another. People would drift from one activity to another, from one conversation to another. And wherever we went, there were loved ones to be with. Wherever we went, there was love and joy, hugs and laughter. It was an incredible 5 days. But there was one huge downer about the reunion. We all knew that it had been a very long time since we were together. And we all realized that we may not ever all be together again. In fact, we recognized that it was very likely that we never would be again. And after all these years, we haven't all been together since.

Our family is large and we're all getting older. At that time my parents were in their late seventies and the grandchildren were growing up and getting ready to move off on their own. Almost all of them now are on their own, with spouses and children of their own. And some of us lived a long way away from the others. The likelihood of all of us being able to be together again was probably slim. We all knew it. As much as we tried to ignore it, that realization hung over all of us. And then the inevitable came. Families had to leave and we had to start saying goodbye. I hate goodbyes. It doesn't seem to me that byes are all that good, especially when that goodbye is to someone you love very much. And yet I realize that our goodbyes today are nothing like they used to be. When our ancestors said goodbye to their loved ones in Europe and came to America, they said those goodbyes realizing that they would never again see one another in this world. And they didn't have telephones to call, text, share pictures, or Facetime one another on. They didn't have computers to send emails, Facebook, or video conference with. They didn't have cars or planes or trains to make travel speedy and safe. All they had was writing letters, which was notoriously unreliable. Imagine those goodbyes. They must have been far more difficult than our goodbyes. Those goodbyes were more permanent, the separation more complete. How their hearts must have ached.

But I haven't even mentioned the worst goodbye of all yet. We've all experienced it. Someone we love very much dies. That's the hardest goodbye of all, bar none. Because all the other goodbyes have at least an element of hope. Maybe, hopefully, we will see one another again someday, somehow. But when death takes someone dear to us, it's so final. It's so complete. It's so unalterable, that it crushes our hearts and we never really get over it. Of course, death is a result of sin. We sin therefore we die. We all sin, therefore we all die.

The Apostle Paul states this very clearly. (Romans 5:12) Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned. And what is sin? Sin is essentially saying goodbye to God. Sin is recognizing that the Lord wants me to go one way, but I am going a different way instead. Sin is acknowledging that God's will is in one action, but I'm going to do something else instead. Sin is leaving the Lord's path. It is abandoning God's way. It is going to places where God doesn't want us to go. It is doing things which God doesn't want us to do. It is acting according to what our sinful nature wants instead of according to what God wants. Sin is saying "Goodbye, Lord. I'm going to do my own thing." And when we say "Goodbye, Lord" the logical response from the Lord would be "Goodbye to you, too. Forever. You want to go your own way. You want to do your own thing. Well, go then. I'll not burden you with Me and the blessings that I bring. Go, then. And enjoy hell, because that's what you've chosen. That's what you deserve." But God did not say "Goodbye." He could have. He should have. But he didn't.

Baby Jesus in the manger in Bethlehem. That's God saying, "Hello, World." Those miracles Jesus did, those sermons he preached, those hugs he gave to the little children, those arms stretched out and nailed to the cross, that empty tomb, that's God saying, "Hello, World." You said "Goodbye" to me, but I am saying "Hello" to you. "You chose sin over me, but I am choosing to save you nonetheless. You opted for sin and hell, but I am bringing you heaven instead. You deserve death, but I am giving you life." We don't merit forgiveness, but Jesus earned it for us anyway with his bloody sacrifice. He bled for our transgressions. He suffered for our iniquity. He died for our wrongdoing. He rose back to life for our salvation. We said 'Goodbye' to God, but Jesus said 'Hello' to us nonetheless. And that "Hello" wasn't just a temporary "Hello." It wasn't just for 33 years and then "Goodbye." Rather, Jesus' "Hello" is an eternal "Hello." It's a "Hello" that lasts for ever and ever.

And because of Jesus, heaven becomes an eternal "Hello" for those who know him as their Savior. And from our earthly perspective, this almost seems the most wonderful heavenly blessing of all. From the moment we as believers in Christ die, we enter heaven. And gathered there to greet us is every single one of our loved ones who also knew Jesus as their Savior. There are brothers, and sisters, and spouses, and parents, and children. There are grandparents, and great-grandparents, uncles, and aunts. There are dear friends, associates, neighbors, and fellow church members. There are people we dearly loved and achingly missed after they died alive and well and with us in salvation. There are Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah and Rachel. There are Joseph, and Moses and Aaron, and Joshua and Caleb. There are David, and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. There are the judges and the believing prophets and priests of old. There is Melchizedek. There are John the Baptist and the apostles. There are

the Mary's and the other women who ministered to Jesus. In the words of our focus verses. There [is] a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They [are] wearing white robes and [are] holding palm branches in their hands. And they [are crying] out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

And, as John's words tell us, there is the greatest One of all. There is Jesus, the One who brought God's "Hello" to earth, along with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. And we will be with him, praising him, glorifying him, worshipping him, and thanking him. We will see the glory, and the majesty, and the splendor, and the power of Jesus, and we will be in awe that this awesome God, left it all behind to die for us. We will see his magnificence, and be overwhelmed that he loved us so much that he put on a man's body and suffered and died to redeem us. We will see the nail holes in his hands and feet and be overwhelmed that this mighty God went to such great lengths to save us. Jesus will be on his throne, and we will be before him with all our loved ones in Christ, and with all the believers through all the ages, in the very presence of God.

And here's the best part, the very best part. We will never, ever, ever have to say "goodbye" again. Not to our loved ones. And not to God. From that point on we will be together, forever. It will be just like our family reunion all those summers ago. Wherever we go, there will be loved ones to be with. Wherever we go, there will be love and joy, hugs and laughter. It will be an incredible eternity. Now I know that we will all be different in our glorified state and that things will be much different in heaven than anything we experience here on earth. Still, as Paul writes in our Epistle reading for today. (1 Corinthians 13:12) Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. There in heaven we will know fully. Surely that includes recognizing our loved ones who are there. And not only will we recognize them, but we shall see them face to face. And we will see the Lord face to face too. And it will be the ultimate "Hello" a "Hello" that will last forever.

As we spoke about a few Sundays ago, in heaven we will have a new start. That means that we will say "Goodbye" to sin, and suffering, and the difficulties of this world. We'll say "Goodbye" to mortality, frustration, and so many other unpleasant things. But in heaven there are no more "Goodbyes" in regard to our loved ones. And there are no more "Goodbyes" in regard to God. There is only an eternal "Hello." We will all be together forever. Which underscores an incredibly important application of this truth. Since we want to be with God forever, should we not then do everything we can to make sure we are providing the Holy Spirit every opportunity to feed our souls and preserve our faith? Since we long to go to heaven and experience the eternal "Hello" should we not make God's Word and Sacraments our top priorities in life because only believers in Jesus their Savior go there and it is through the Gospel that the Holy Spirit feeds our faith? And a related application. Since we want our loved ones to be with God and us forever, should we not then do everything we can to make sure we are feeding their souls and preserving their faith as well? Should we not place the instruction of our children in the truths of God's Word at the very top of our parenting priority list? Should we not make a point to discuss the Lord with our wavering and wandering loved ones, no matter how difficult it might be?

Dear friends, we want as many of our loved ones as possible to be in heaven with us. The more who precede us there the bigger our welcoming party! The more who come after us, the more we will have to welcome! So let us do everything in our power to ensure that we will be enjoying the eternal "Hello" together with all of our loved ones.

T. E. Brown wrote of a lighthouse in the British Isles. It was situated on a small island in the stormy straight. On the larger island just across the stormy sound from the lighthouse a long slope ran up to the crest of the island. Near the top of that slope were the cottages inhabited by the families of the lighthouse keepers. Their doors faced the lighthouse. For months at a time the keepers could not visit their families. But on a clear day, when the sun shone brightly, they would comfort themselves by looking through a powerful telescope at their wives and children gathered around the cottages across the water. In the same way, between us and our beloved dead is a gulf which we may not cross until God bids us come. But there are days when the fog lifts and the mists are dispelled and with the aid of the eyeglass of faith, we see those loved ones in the brilliant glory of their heavenly home. And we miss them and long to be with them.

But we know that one day, by the grace of God, we will hear them say along with our dear Savior, "Hello, Welcome to heaven." And we will realize with joy that now, in heaven, we will never have to say "Goodbye" again. Not goodbye to loved ones. Not goodbye to God. Only an eternal hello. What a wonderful day that will be!