

HEAVEN ON EARTH (Lk. 9:33; Mk. 9:5) 8.8
 "Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us build three tents."

I. The Joy of Heaven on Earth (the good we can have)

1. The Thrill of high moments of inspiration

A. Jacob at Peniel

B. Outstanding revival blessings.

C. Times of high personal devotion and calm

quiet with personal communion with God.

D. Such experiences seem like "Heaven on Earth", as we say.

2. The Vision on the Mountain.

A. The transfiguration was such an experience for the disciples.

B. What this vision was

(1). A vision of Christ's deity

(2). A vision of glorified saints

(3). A vision of the Father's presence

(4). A vision of Jesus only, MK. 9:8

3. The Communion service is a mountain top experience

"Rise, my soul! Behold, 'tis Jesus,

Jesus fills thy wondering eyes; let Jordan

See Him now in glory seated,

Where thy sins no more can rise.

God now brings thee to His dwelling,

Spreads for thee His feast divine,

Bids thee welcome, ever telling

What a portion there is thine."

II. The Tragedy of a Limited Heaven on Earth only (there)

1. It was good to be there, but it was not good to remain

2. Peter would rather remain there in his ecstasy forever, than go down from the mountain and engage in the practical duties of life.

A. Illustration of Longfellow's poem "Excelsior".

B. Christians can lose sight of the practical duties of life, and dwell in a narrow "3 tent heaven."

3. Peter forgot the other disciples, the great world beneath, and the generations to come.

A. This is the death-warrant of the missionary enterprise

B. (over)

B. What sort of a Christian is it who is satisfied if he can only gain heaven for himself, even if the rest of the world is lost?

C. Question on Communion Sunday:

"Has anyone been omitted in the distribution of the bread? . . . There are millions of men, women, and children in every continent where they need the Lord and have never heard His gospel, . . . who rise up to remind us that, Yes, they have been omitted in the distribution of the communion bread. They can receive it from no hands but ours, and we do not pass it on.)

D. Is it good to keep the gospel only to ourselves and not share it with others?

(1). When every man is his own end, all things will come to a bad end.

(2). Some cannot see beyond the three tents of their own person, family, or church.

(3). Can our churches and homes be safe, unless the nation is secure?

(4). We cannot exist in religious isolationism any more than a nation can exist safely isolated from the rest of today's world.

(5). Our religion must be given up or given out.

4. While Peter's wish was natural and understandable and seemingly pious, it was basically selfish and mistaken, for he expressed it "not knowing what he said.

A. Our pious wishes are not always wise.

B. Another instance of well-meaning but rash judgment.

5. God has something infinitely better for us than this narrow "3 tent" Heaven on Earth.

A. Here was but an earthly hill; there will be an eternal heavenly home.

B. Here, was but 2 saints; there, the mighty multitude of the redeemed whom no man can number.

C. Here was but Christ transfigured; there, He will sit at the rt hand of God, enthroned in the majesty of heaven.

D. Here was an experience for a brief interval; there an everlasting gift and permanent possession of joy.

E. Here we have no continuing city, but there is a mountain of glory and joy before us from which we shall never come down.

Sermon "Heaven on Earth" Cont.

- II. The Tragedy of a Limited Heaven on Earth Only,
(Cont.)
- 6. To "peg our life at a fixed point" may block greater possibilities of life.
 - A. Even an understandable desire to prolong rich blessings can prove to be a mistake, for it can ruin the potentials of tomorrow.
 - B. Some people can say of their spiritual life, "This is as far as I go."
 - C. Some Christians peg their spiritual progress away back in their past.
 - D. This is often a result of having a faith which fails to grow.
 - E. Thus a revived life which might have been an exciting voyage of discovery is chained to a spot reached before any genuine exploration could really begin.
What if Columbus had stopped after his first voyage to the New World, thinking that was all there was to it?
 - F. It was good for Peter to have had the transfiguration experience, but it was not good for him to try to prolong it.
I have known churches to reach a certain plateau and stop there and refuse to move on with further building or outreach programs, and it proved to be the end of spiritual vitality and progress for them.
We should always be open to consider how we might be of greater service to the Lord and have a more useful ministry in His vineyard.

III. What, then, is the Real Value of these Mountain-top
 1. They make Christ more precious to us.

2. They give us a foretaste of eternal glory

A. "The leafless tree,
 trembling in the cold blast of the winter wind,
 is the image of what we now are;
 the same tree covered with foliage, blossoms,
 and fruit, (be)
 is the symbol of what the glorified soul shall
 The dark, sorrowful cloud hanging heavily in
 the sky, represents our present state;
 that cloud, penetrated by the rays of the morning
 light, fringed with gold,
 beautified by the splendors of the rising sun,
 is the symbol of the glory that shall be revealed
 in the spirits of redeemed men.
 The mind shall have the pure light of perfect
 knowledge unmixed with error;
 The heart shall be filled with perfect bliss&love.
 The whole nature shall be in absolute harmony
 with itself, with its celestial environment,
 and with its God.

B. How we know there is a heaven.

Because our Father has written us a letter from them

3. They are preparation to fit us for service in the
valley

A. There was work to be done
 B. There was sorrow to be lightened
 C. There was sin to be grappled with & overcome
 D. After seeing his glory,
 we must listen to his voice,
 then go forth to do his will.

Norwood B.C. 1/3-85

H.M. B.C. 2/3/87
 Cent. Ch. Augsburg, 28 Feb. 65