

Faith, Hope and Love
Part 2: “Born Again to a Living Hope”
1 Peter 1:3-5
Pastor Charles Price

I am going to read to you from 1 Peter Chapter 1. And before I do so I am going to take a few minutes to set the scene and remind you that last week we read that one verse at the end of 1 Corinthians Chapter 13 where Paul writes,

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love.”

And over three Sundays we are looking at these three virtues of Christian experience: faith, which is primarily about our attitude to God; hope, primarily our attitude to the future; love, primarily our attitude to others.

And I said last week that these three virtues, faith, hope and love, are like a three-legged stool on which Christian experience rests. If one leg breaks, the stool collapses.

So we are not at liberty to say, well, I would like some love and I’d like faith but I am not so sure about hope. Or I would like hope but I am not so sure about love. These three must remain intact and remain together.

Today I want to talk about hope. There are 158 verses as far as I can see in the Bible that address hope. And it is one of the great virtues that enable us to live in dark times and difficult times such as are inevitable in life and in the Christian life.

Let me just define how this word is used. This word is not used as an unsure optimism such as, “I hope this sunny weather will last for the next month”. Well I hope so is a rather uncertain optimism.

Rather this hope is a confident expectation: “I hope to sleep in my own bed tonight.” I’ve got no other plans, so I hope to sleep – that’s a confident expectation.

And the way that the word hope is used in the New Testament is as a confident expectation. It has within it an optimism, an expectation, a promise of better things.

In practice hope orients our lives around a better future. That is not to be escapist about the present but because there is a better future. And whatever we are going through now, there is a better future ultimately that we are going to experience and enjoy.

Let me just comment first on why hope is essential. I have quoted to you before Viktor Frankl whose writings I appreciate very much. Viktor Frankl was an Austrian Jew who was imprisoned in Auschwitz, one of the worst of the concentration camps during World War II.

He survived his time there though his new wife, shortly married before they were sent to Auschwitz, died there. His parents died there.

And Frankl had trained to be a physician in Austria, in Vienna. And his experiences in Auschwitz led him to observe the value of hope, that those in the prison camp who had a sense of hope, who would talk about the future, who would talk about what they would do once they got out of this and once the war was over; they are the ones who survived the kind of natural causes of death that seemed to wipe out so many others - of course it didn't delay any gassing in the chambers, but the natural causes of death from which so many of them died.

And after the war he developed a branch of psychiatry called logotherapy. And his theme was to survive any hardship, life needs to be oriented to the future. He believed the key to a person's life lay in what they hoped for.

He observed that psychologists often spent hours unwrapping people's pasts. But in reality it was their sense of future that gave meaning and purpose to their lives. It was their sense of future that gave them the courage to deal with difficulties and issues from their past.

When a patient came to see him with a multitude of torments, you know, whether they were great or small, he would listen to them and then often he would ask them this question. He would say, "Can I ask you, why don't you commit suicide?"

That's not the most reassuring question to be asked by your doctor. But he said the answer they gave to that question revealed the key to their life.

One might say, "Because of my children. That's why I don't commit suicide."

And he saw in their children a sense of hope and meaning and significance.

Somebody might say, "Because I have a talent that I want to use that I haven't yet used to its potential." That would be the key, he felt, or a key to their life.

Another he says might have memories they want to preserve, another, have something they want to achieve, a relationship they want to better.

And he said this thing that they hoped for that was bigger in value than death when all their life was falling apart in every other area, was the key to their will to live.

Without hope we have no sense of joy and meaning and life. Some place hope in wealth. If that becomes shattered they have no longer any value left within themselves. Hence, during even the recession of a few years ago a number of suicides by people who built their hope in wealth, some build their hope in science, some in technology, some in human nature, some build their hope in marriage, some in politics, all number of things that people place their hope.

The Christian places their hope in God who transcends all of that. And of the 158 verses that address this theme of hope in the Bible, many speak of *the hope*, the hope of the believer. And when it speaks of the hope, it is usually speaking of the ultimate end of this life. And the

transference from this life to another life, from this place to another place; it is speaking of heaven.

And I am going to read to you from 1 Peter Chapter 1. I gave you enough time to find it. I am going to read Verses 3, 4 and 5, 1 Peter Chapter 1, just these three verses.

Peter writes,

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”

One of the great hopes of the Christian is the hope of heaven, the hope that this life is not what it’s all about; it’s not the sum totality of our existence.

Now I confess to you I have hardly ever preached about heaven in the many, many years I have been preaching. And partly it is because we don’t know very much about it. We know it is there but the Bible does not give much detail as to what kind of life it is going to be.

But I thought it would be valuable this morning to just think about heaven as the great hope of the Christian.

Let me clarify the use of this word first because the Bible speaks of heaven or heavens in three different ways.

It speaks of the heavens as being the clouds, for instance, or the earth’s atmosphere, several times. For an example, Genesis 7:11 when the flood came in Noah’s day, it says,

“The floodgates of the heavens were opened.”

That’s the clouds, and the rain came beating down.

Genesis 11 when they wanted to build the Tower of Babel, they said,

“Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves.”

What they are meaning is it will reach us to the clouds.

That’s the first use of the word heaven or heavens.

Secondly, it is used of the sky, of the stars at night, of the visible universe.

Genesis 15:5, God said to Abraham,

“Look up at the heavens and count the stars – if indeed you can count them.”

So there it was looking up at the night sky.

“When I look at the heavens,” one of the Psalms, “and I see the marvel of your creation.”

But the third use of the word heaven is as the place where God lives, His home. The book of Revelation pulls back the curtain on mysteries that we cannot know in this life apart from by revelation and he takes us into heaven and we see great scenes around the throne of God.

It’s a place from which Jesus came. He said in John 6:38,

“I have come down from heaven, not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”

“I have come down from a place. It’s the place where my Father lives.”

When Paul talked in 2 Corinthians about a man being caught up into the third heaven, (remember that instance?), a man caught up into the third heaven and hearing inexpressible things he was not permitted to tell.

This third heaven is the dwelling place of God.

This is also the future home of those of us who are in Christ.

Now I suppose one reason why I have not preached about heaven very much is because the Gospel is not primarily about a place and the New Testament never gives us that impression.

It is about a person of course. It is about being reconciled to God. It is entering into a relationship with God, an active, living relationship with God that permeates both time and then eternity.

So when Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:10,

“Christ died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.”

By awake he means alive; by asleep he means dead.

Whether alive or dead, awake or asleep, on earth or in heaven, is actually irrelevant to the relationship to which we have been called, which is to live together with Him.

Heaven is not dangled as a bribe to get people to trust Christ. If it is, we will be more interested in heaven than we are interested in Christ.

That's like getting married and being more interested in your new house than you are in your new wife, or your new husband. You need a house to live in.

There is a place to go. But the central issue of that place is the relationship which we have with God and with the Lord Jesus Christ.

So what do we know about heaven?

The answer is not a lot. All we do know is by revelation that comes to us in Scripture and therefore to know anything about heaven means we must trust this book.

No one has gone there and come back and given us a record. There are a few questionable books around but don't take them too seriously.

But our source of understanding and information is what the Scripture tells us. And for most of us, talking about heaven is a bit like, you know, talking about the Antarctica. I mean we know a few things about it. Most of us have never been there although there is somebody in our congregation who used to fly airplanes in the Antarctica.

But for the rest of us, it's like, you know, it's cold; what does that mean? What does it feel like?

Or talking about Mars or talking about Pluto – they've just discovered some new things about Pluto in the last week. You know, we can talk about it, but we have no experience of it; it's just cold facts, by and large.

But I do want to give you some things that we know. And there are five things that are all either implicit or explicit in these verses in 1 Peter.

First of all, first thing we know about heaven is it is a place. It is a location. He speaks in 1 Peter 1:4 of,

“... an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you.”

It's an actual place.

Jesus said in John 14,

“In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

And in those verses He talks about buildings, He talks about rooms; He talks about mansions (in the King James Version at least). He talks about places. It's a place.

Now as to where in the universe, we have no idea. Heaven is not limited by the normal boundaries of time and space. But Scripture does teach us it is a real place that can be seen, touched, inhabited by beings with material bodies.

It is not sort of ethereal floating around, ethereal floating around as spirits, but we have new physical bodies.

Will we know each other there? Is a question people often ask and I have absolutely no doubt that we will know each other there. I don't think I will be walking around heaven for a million years and one day I bump into a woman and get into a conversation and say, "What's your name," and she says, "My name is Hilary."

And I say, "Ah, really? I used to be married to a Hilary back on earth. Really? Where were you living?"

"Well, we were living near Toronto in Canada. We were living there in the 21st Century."

"No, I was there in the 21st Century! What was your address? Oh no, that was my address. Are you, are you Hilary Price?"

"Yeah. Are you Charles Price? Oh my, fancy meeting you here after a million years! How have you been getting on?"

No, I don't think so. I don't think so.

We do know some things are going to be different. There will be no marriage in heaven. We know that, unfortunately (sorry about that, Hilary – maybe that's good, I don't know).

I beg your pardon...I can't hear her because you are all laughing. She's giving me some insight there.

But we are told there is no marriage. You know, Jesus was asked about a woman who married the eldest of seven brothers. And they said to Him, this woman married the eldest of seven brothers and then this older brother died.

So she married the second brother and he died. So she married the third brother. You wouldn't believe it – he died. So she married the fourth brother, and guess what? He died. She married the fifth brother – he died and she married the sixth brother. He died and then she married the seventh brother and you wouldn't believe it; he died as well.

If I was her father in law, I would want to know what she's putting in the soup. But all these seven brothers died and then they said to Jesus, "Now here's a problem for you: whose wife will she be when she gets to heaven?"

And Jesus said to them, "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven."

So it seems that the angels are genderless and apparently so will we.

That seems to be one insight. Don't ask me the implications of that. All we know is that particular insight that Jesus gave.

But we do know there is actually going to be a marriage in heaven and we're all going to be involved because it is going to be the great wedding feast to which we are all invited. In fact we are all going to participate as the bride of Christ marrying Him, that our relationships, our love relationship will be something deeper than we can ever know here on earth.

And when you get to the end of the book of Revelation you don't know it is going to be a marriage until then. If you start in the beginning and you work your way through, you do not know until the last two chapters this is a love story and there is a marriage at the end of it.

Are there going to be animals in heaven?

Well apparently, the pope recently said that our pets will be there. I don't know where he got that from; I don't know whether he was having a bad day or whether he had had some fresh insight.

But apparently – I haven't found the actual quote but I saw in the newspaper the pope says our pets will be in heaven.

I hope ours won't be. If she is, I hope she will wander for a million years in the other direction.

The only comment that Jesus ever made about that was when he said in Matthew 6,

“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither, where neither moth nor rust destroy.”

There's going to be no moths in heaven apparently, or if there are, they are not going to be destructive; they will have been converted. I think as a basic rule of thumb, I think we can say everything good here on earth will be better there in heaven; everything beautiful here on earth will be more beautiful there in heaven.

It won't be a step down in terms of the pleasures that we enjoy here. It will be in fact a step up.

I think we can assume that on the basis of all the metaphorical images it gives of heaven that are indescribable in their beauty and their wonder.

Revelation 7, John has a vision of a great multitude that no one could number from every nation, every tribe, every people, every language, and they have come through a great tribulation and they have been washed and they have been cleansed. And it says of them in Verse 16 of Revelation 7,

“Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.

“For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

That’s a beautiful picture – no hunger, no thirst, no fear, no tears. And such tears that are will be wiped from our eyes. No discomfort even.

And our access to heaven is immediate on leaving this earth. There is no biblical indication of purgatory for instance, or waiting period where you are on probation. There is no indication of soul sleep, as some speak, that you go to sleep and you wake up on the judgement day, because Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:8,

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”

Absent one moment; present immediately. Absent from this body; present with the Lord.

So Paul was anticipating an immediate transference into His presence.

Philippians 1:23:

“I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.”

So there he says, “I want to die to be with Christ.” Not to go into some waiting room to then be with Christ. If that’s the case, I’d rather stay around here and be useful, and then when I have to go to the waiting room, well and good.

But no, my desire is to depart and to immediately be with Christ, but I am staying here as long as He keeps me here.

But Paul’s understanding clearly was an immediate - this moment, that moment; on earth, in heaven; in the body, in His presence.

So that’s the first thing – it’s a place.

Secondly, it is a party. Now I am going to use that word – it may seem flippant. I am only using it because it begins with P – they all begin with P. But I think it will convey some of the idea as well, because in 1 Peter 1:4 Peter writes about,

“an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you.”

He talks about an inheritance, about a celebration.

Now what is that? Well we could say that it is all we inherit in Christ now, but maxed out to its fullness. I mean Ephesians 1:18 says,

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and in his incomparably great power for those who believe.”

So he is saying there that one of the hopes to which we have called you is the riches of everything we have in Jesus Christ being made full in our experience. His love for us will be full. Our love for Him will be full. His power in us, he mentions here, will be full.

C.S. Lewis says, “*Joy is the serious business of heaven.*” It will be a place and time of joy and excitement.

You know elsewhere Jesus talked about gaining treasures in heaven. Matthew 6:20 He says,

“Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”

Now what are these treasures that we are to store up in heaven? Do we measure treasure in heaven the way we measure treasure on earth? I doubt it very much.

Revelation tells us the streets of heaven will be paved with gold. I wonder why. Is it because he is portraying that the streets are of such great value, paved with gold?

Or is he portraying the idea that gold won't be worth anything more than paving?

I think that's what he is portraying.

All the values of this life will be turned on their head. Gold won't mean very much – you can pave the streets with it.

So how do we measure treasure in heaven? This is a difficult one because if there is treasure in heaven, there is lack of treasure in heaven as well.

And we thought everybody was going to be happy there, there is going to be no tears, there's going to be no sadness. If some people have treasure and some don't, what about the people who don't? Are they going to walk around feeling a little shame all their lives, all their forever's? “Man, I wish I had not done that. I wish I had been more obedient. I wish I had served more.”

I doubt it. I doubt there will be shame or even regret in heaven.

So what is the treasure? I once heard a man suggest an idea which I like and have thought about. He said treasure will not be about possessions so much as about appreciation about love of Jesus.

Let me illustrate the way he illustrated it. He talked about people on a different level of appreciation for art, for music, for ballet. Two people can look at the same thing and one is bored; the other is enthralled.

When it comes to art, my appreciation is rather superficial. Many years ago I was in London and the National Art Gallery is just off Trafalgar Square and I had a meeting and I had time on my hands. And it started to rain so I went into the National Gallery because it was free. And I knew there were some famous pictures there. I knew there were some Rembrandts. I knew there were Constables, Picassos, Van Gogh etc.

So I walked around. I found the famous ones first. “Oh that’s Rembrandt. My, look at that. And this is a Picasso.” You kind of look at it at different angles to make out exactly what it was.

I walked down a few corridors where there were paintings on the wall and I kind of looked at most of them as I walked by.

And after twenty minutes I had done the circuit and I came back. It was still raining. I still had some time, so I thought I will do the circuit again.

When I came down one of the corridors there was a man standing looking at a painting. He had been there the first time I came around and he had just been standing, looking, staring into this painting.

Well there were about a dozen paintings on the wall I suppose, so I had come down the corridor and I looked at this painting and then looked at that painting and then look at this painting, then look at the next painting, then look at the next painting, and, “Oh no, I am in his way if I walk past,” so I stand and look at the painting next to him and glance over at his. What is it?” Then, “Excuse me,” and I walked past him to the other side to look again at the painting, what he was looking at.

I came around a second time and he was still looking at that painting. I thought, “Oh goodness me, what is wrong with him?”

When I went home that night, I told Hilary, “I saw a lot of pictures today. It was raining.”

He would have gone home and said, “I saw the most beautiful, exquisite work of art today.”

He had a depth of appreciation that I simply don’t have.

And maybe there will be those who have a depth of love and appreciation and relationship with Jesus that others won’t have.

You see I didn’t go home feeling I had missed something by not absorbing myself in that painting – it just didn’t touch the things in me it was touching in him.

Maybe some will have a deep relationship and love for Jesus; others will live in a poverty of that love and a poverty of that appreciation, in a poor quality relationship.

And if you say, “That’s okay, that’s no big deal,” well, it illustrates the point. It will be no big deal to the non-appreciation of art. It’s not a big deal; I just didn’t enter in as he could. And I will never know what I am missing in contrast to what he was absorbing.

We may spend eternity never knowing what we are missing in contrast to those who will have that full or fuller appreciation of Jesus, His love, their love.

But it is going to be a party. It is going to be joy. It is going to be celebration. There will be no tears. There will be deep appreciation of that.

Third thing, it’s permanent. It’s a place, it’s a party, it’s permanent because in Verse 4 he speaks of,

“into an inheritance that can never perish, never spoil, never fade.”

That word *never* is the important word, unending. It’s very difficult to talk about the nature of eternity. We have no experience of it. We know it’s not just unending time. We know time had a beginning. Time has not always been. It is a created thing.

Genesis 1 says,

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

So that means there was not only a beginning; there was a before the beginning. And before the beginning God was already in existence, so when the beginning began, God was the One who was behind the beginning and God was the One who was already there.

So where was God before the beginning? He was in eternity. Eternity is not measured by time. Now because we only know time, we only know space, it’s hard for us to begin to think outside of terms of space and time.

We live in a very secure, continuously moving, progressive thing called time. Tomorrow becomes today; today becomes yesterday, and we are simply passing through it. The future becomes the present and then the present becomes the past.

We measure time by seconds, by moments. We measure by hours. Hour by hour, day by day, year by year, decade by decade, century by century, millennium by millennium. We can add any figure around it to measure it.

But what we cannot do is look everlastingly backwards. There is a beginning. Science will tell us that. They will tell us there was a beginning and there was a time when there was no time – that’s not an oxymoron. And Scripture tells us that as well.

But eternity is outside of time. We don't have a tomorrow. We don't have a yesterday. We have a now and that now is never-ending and that is a mystery to us.

If you think of it in 10,000 years, you might think, "I'm going to get bored in 10,000 years. What in the world am I going to do that's fresh and different?"

No it's an ever-now, it's an eternal now, and we can go no more than say that.

But then the fourth thing, if that is that it's permanent, the fourth thing is it is perfect because Verse 5 of 1 Peter 1 speaks of the salvation that is ready to be revealed at the last time.

What is the nature of that salvation that is to be revealed at the last time? We know the nature of our salvation now. What about the last? What is being added to it?

Now I love a verse in Jude Verses 24 and 25,

"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord...now and forevermore."

The part that struck me and that I looked at in the last couple of days is the statement "to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy."

Can you believe that? That the Lord Jesus will one day say to His Father, "Father, here is Charles Price. He is without fault and I present him to You with great joy."

When I wrote those notes yesterday, I found tears began to come to my eyes, that there will be a day when I am without fault. And Jesus will not embarrassingly introduce me to His Father, "This is Charles Price, messed up here, there, everywhere, you know, but I am going to give him to You anyway."

No, with joy.

This is one of my greatest anticipations of heaven that the old nature that constantly fights against the Spirit, the new nature, will be gone. We will be new nature purified.

That maybe raises the question, can we sin in heaven? It's a good question because Lucifer sinned in heaven. He was the most perfect of all God's angelic beings and there was a time before time back in the eternity past, before the creation of the world, when Lucifer wanted to be like God.

He was the most beautiful of all the angels. He was the most senior of all the angels. And he challenged God and was cast out of heaven and, according to a reference in the book of Revelation, up to a third of the angels joined him in his rebellion.

And they were cast to the earth. When the earth was created this became their initial dwelling place. And we know them today as demons, and Lucifer we know as the devil.

So he sinned in heaven. Can we sin in heaven? Are we going to be free agents with a choice and a mind of our own? I think we have to be; we're not going to be robots, super computers.

I like to think of it like this. I have a three-month old granddaughter. She lives on the 19th floor of an apartment block here in Toronto. If I ask the question, can her mother (that is, my daughter), can her mother throw that baby off the balcony of the 19th floor?

What is the answer to the question? The answer is physically, yes, she could take that baby and toss it over and gravity would take over and she could crush that baby.

But the true answer is no, not in a million years can she throw that baby off that balcony. She would rather throw herself off and she would, rather than throw off that little baby.

Why? Because her heart is so wrapped around that baby, of course she cannot throw her off.

Will we be able to sin in heaven? The capability must be there as it was with Lucifer. But will we? Absolutely not. Not in a billion years, not in an eternity.

Why? Because we know the utter sickness of sin. We have seen it, we have experienced it. But we remain people with a mind and a will and a love and a responsiveness rather than just controlled.

So, it's going to be perfect.

And the fifth thing, and the last thing quickly, is the process.

It is a place, will be a party, is permanent, perfect. The process.

So how do we get there?

1 Peter 1:3 says,

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Notice that – it is new birth that He has given us into this living hope – new birth.

Jesus said to a religious man, Nicodemus, in John Chapter 3:3,

“I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”

What does it mean to be born again? What is this new birth?

It is the reception of spiritual life because we are by nature spiritually dead. Scripture is clear about that.

And the new birth is the birth of that new life.

How does it come about?

By acknowledging my deadness, acknowledging my need, acknowledging my sin and saying, “Lord Jesus, You died to pay for my sin, You died to settle the score with Your Father and take all the judgement of my sin upon Yourself. And having done so, I want to thank You. And I ask You to come and live within me.”

And we are born again to a new life, a new life that will be rich in this life on earth, but is a new birth into a living hope that will last beyond and take us forever into the presence of God.

There is no other way. There are not three options. There are not two options. There is one way. We must be born again.

Can I ask you, have you been born again? Have you confessed your sin, your need, and received Jesus Christ into your life with all the joy and fullness of that here and now, but with the confident expectation that this living hope will take you through the grave, through death, to an eternity in His presence?

Just one more thing about this before I finish. Jesus said in John 14:3,

“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

The bit I want to stress, He said, “I will come back and take you.”

This is Jesus Himself who will come to us at death, who will meet us at death, who will take us at death to be with Himself.

He doesn't delegate this to angels. He doesn't delegate this to sweet chariots coming for to carry me home. Forget the chariots, forget the angels; your first awareness at death will be Jesus Himself.

“I will come.”

And as we spoke a few weeks ago, a few months ago now about in His eternal nature Jesus is able to hear every prayer as though it was no other prayer.

So He will meet with you as though there is nobody else dying at that particular moment and He will meet with you and He will welcome you and He will take you home.

Some of us are going to die – sorry that’s a mistake – all of us are going to die. Some of us have faced that reality this week. There are those of us in our congregation who have seen loved ones live long lives but their time had come and they have died this week.

Another in our congregation experienced a tragic death this week of a family member in a road accident - one moment happily driving; next moment gone.

We all face that at some point. But are we ready to face it? Are we ready at that moment to be absent from the body but to be present with the Lord?

We are going to pray together. I don’t know how the Holy Spirit may have been speaking to you. There are intriguing, tantalizing bits and pieces of information that we have about heaven, but the most important thing is are we ready? Are we ready?

And if you are not, or you are not sure if you are, I’d like you to pray with me a simple prayer acknowledging our need to be born again. Would you pray this with me quietly in your own heart, “Lord Jesus, I acknowledge that I am separated from You. You are distant, remote to me, yet I know that You do love me. I believe that Jesus died for me. Thank You for that. Would you please come and live in my life? Would you please give me that gift of eternal life that is knowing You here in this life and on forever? Thank You for hearing my prayer. Thank You for coming into my life. In Jesus’ name.

And if you prayed that with me, I am going to pray for you.

Lord Jesus, I pray for any who prayed those words this morning, whose hearts have been drawn to Yourself by the Holy Spirit at work within them, longing deep down for security and safety. We pray that You will give that to them, that they will have a sense as the Holy Spirit bears witness within their spirits that they are children of God, that there is something new, something fresh, something deep, something completely transforming has taken place, that they will grow in You. And I commit them to You.

And for the rest of us, for those of us who don’t know You, I pray You will draw us quickly to Yourself. For those who do, help us to enjoy You this week and to remember that the best is yet to be.