

# Life in Light of Heaven

## Series: What's After ATX? (Part 2)

### Colossians 3:1-4

Kevin Maurice --- April 26, 2020

Good morning, church! I'm excited for our time together today as we continue our conversation about heaven. And I'm eager to get into the Word because our passage this morning is going to tell us so much about how we can live like heaven is real. And I truly believe if you take this to heart, if you embed it in your soul, if you reframe how you make decisions based on this passage of Scripture, it could change your life and the lives of those around you.

Now, last week we talked about Heaven. We asked, *What does the Bible say that heaven will be like?* If you missed that sermon you can find it online on our website. I'll do a quick review and then we're going to shift our attention to how we can live like Heaven is real.

This is what we learned about Heaven last week. The Scriptures say, God's Word gives us a compelling vision of eternity. And the truth that we learned from Revelation 21 is that, when Jesus returns, God renews, He recreates His creation in a new Heaven and a new Earth. And, ultimately, that is where every Christian soul will live and dwell forever. And the Bible is really clear that this dwelling place will be new and real and we will have heavenly, perfected bodies there. Heaven will be the most real place we've ever known. It will be as if here we were living in black and white, and there the full spectrum of color is going to be visible to us.

The Bible also tells us that we'll experience relationships in Heaven – most importantly with God Himself, our Creator, the author and perfecter of our faith. We will see God face to face. We'll also enjoy relationships with other believers throughout history. This week, I was tucking my daughter into bed, and part of our bedtime routine is we read from her Children's Storybook Bible, and the passage this week was about the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary. And I told my Mary that she's named after this Mary in the Bible. And she thought about this for a second and then she asked very sweetly, "Dad, will I get to meet her in Heaven?" And I said, "Yeah, I think you will." And she said, "Good, I want to tell her that we have the same name." That's a great icebreaker.

We will have relationships in Heaven. And that's amazing. And in Heaven we're going to have freedom -- a freedom from sin and brokenness that we've never had -- no more tears or sadness or hurt. And we'll also experience a freedom for, a freedom for our true purpose to live into our true identity as sons and daughters, as children of God, co-heirs with Christ. And Church, that is what Heaven will be like. And that's our destiny.

So, Heaven should give us great hope. But it's not this escapist hope. Knowledge of eternity is not something that we use to sedate ourselves from the difficulty in life or from the fear of dying. As we're going to see in Scripture in a moment, the reality of Heaven should actually wake us up to how to live life here on Earth. Heaven is not just a doctrine to know. Nothing in the Bible is written solely for the sake of our intellect. God's Word describes Heaven to us for the purpose of changing how we live life, because we're meant to live like Heaven is real and like we know we're going there.

So how do we do that? How do we live meaningfully here on Earth, knowing that this place is only a foretaste, a foreshadowing, of Heaven? How can we think of the next world and also make a difference in this one? That's what we're going to study today. Please join me in your Bibles. Turn to Colossians chapter 3. We're going to look at some other verses today as well, but Colossians 3:1-4 is going to guide our time together. Because this passage gives us a clear outline for how to live life with the hope of Heaven. In this passage we're going to see the truth of Heaven and how it should affect our hearts, our minds, and how we live.

Starting in verse 1, the Bible says - **<sup>1</sup> If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.**

If you have been raised with Christ, meaning if you are a Christian, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, then this passage gives us three very clear instructions for how to live like we know Heaven is real. Three things: our heart, our mind, and our life.

## Set Your Heart on Heaven

Our first instruction for a Heaven-oriented reality -- back to verse 1 -- **If you have been raised with Christ -- SEEK THE THINGS that are above.** Some translations say, **SET YOUR**

**HEART on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.** If you are a Christian, if you want to live a significant life here on Earth, filled with meaning and purpose – **SET YOUR HEART ON HEAVEN.**

Set your heart on heaven -- you could also translate this as seek or desire or pursue. And there's this very soulful connotation to it. Pursue eternity with your heart. And that's why it's so critical to have a perspective on Heaven – so that we might desire it and imagine what it will be like. Because, generally, we only really think about and talk about Heaven infrequently. Maybe it's when we're sitting in church or attending a funeral.

But this passage tells us to desire Heaven. And it's an active verb, meaning it's not a one-and-done; it's something that we do continually. It's not that we seek Heaven once, we become a Christian, and then we're all set; we can stop thinking about it, we can stop pursuing the things above. Or, that we only set our affection on Heaven at a memorial service or when we're in church teaching on it. No, Colossians 3:1 says to set your heart on Heaven actively, always, every single day. **Live like Heaven is real and like you know you're headed there.**

We're meant to seek Heaven, where we are destined to live for eternity with Christ. Because the things of Earth are temporary; the things of Heaven will last forever. Hebrews 13 tells us this – **For here [this life] we have no lasting city, but we seek the city [we seek Heaven] that is to come.** To live significantly in a world that will not last, you must place your heart and your hope in a place that will.

Jesus says this clearly, in Matthew 6: <sup>19</sup> **“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.** Setting your hearts on things above means treasuring the things of Heaven.

This ought to change how we look at the world and the way that we spend our time and money and resources and relationships. Because, consider for a moment, the ways that we attempt to bring purpose, meaning, and fulfillment to our lives – the things that we treasure -- self-worth, wealth, pleasure, control, whatever it might be. Your spouse, your family, your children, your career, your health, any number of things, right? The things in life that we treasure most are the things we place our hope in. And the things that we hope in are the things that we hope will bring us the most joy.

But if you put all of your hope, if you place all of your treasure here on Earth, then whatever that thing is or whoever that person is, whatever has all of your heart, better not let you down, and they better not fail to live up to your expectations. And they had better last forever. Because if it disappoints, if it fails you, if it doesn't last eternally, then your hope was misplaced and your treasure was lost.

And the truth is – nothing here on Earth can take that weight. Nothing here on Earth is supposed to. Your ultimate hope, your deepest desire, your soul identity cannot rest on the shoulders of your husband or your wife, or your career goals or your retirement plan or your kids. Those aren't bad things, they can provide joy in life, but they cannot be the primary treasure of your heart. We're told to set our heart on things above because Heaven will last. The things of Heaven, Christ Himself, our restored relationship with the Father -- that is what brings ultimate joy.

Now, I've already said this isn't escapism. It's also not stoicism or ascetism. Setting your heart on things above doesn't mean withdrawing or pulling away from this world and not enjoying the blessed things and the relationships of this life. That's not what I'm saying. Instead, it means leveraging the good and the passing and, sometimes, the fleeting moments of joy that we have here and leveraging that into a longing for eternity, a longing for the eternal joy that we will have with Christ. Knowing that this world is not going to last should actually deepen our love for it and expand our yearning for eternity and the reality that is to come.

And so how can you actively begin to set your heart on Heaven in your daily life? How can you begin to treasure things above, and not only below?

Perhaps your time is the most valuable thing to you, and a personal study time in God's Word has proven really difficult in the past. It just feels like there's not enough time. Could you begin to set your Heart on things above and treasure time in the Bible, in Scripture? Because the Word of God will last into eternity and we have it today. And so, reading it and memorizing it and absorbing Scripture is such a powerful way to seek the things that are above. You could begin each day here and simply read a psalm, think about it, meditate on it, mull it over in your head, set your heart on Heaven.

Or find time to still your soul from distraction and spend time with your Creator, sitting quietly with God, imagining and treasuring Heaven. Maybe it's a new or renewed practice of daily prayer. You could begin to incorporate worship into your routine. Worship will stretch into

infinity. We're told worship exists in Heaven. Make a playlist of songs that you listen to at the beginning of your day or at the end of it, because music is such a powerful tool for contemplation. Just listen to the songs and ponder things that are above.

So often, lack of time is our primary obstacle or excuse for how we could think about investing in our spiritual lives or improving our spiritual lives. But most of us are now living with more margin in our days and our lives than we ever have before. We've got a lot of time. Let's not miss this opportunity to begin a new routine of treasuring Heaven. What is a practice that you could begin today or tonight to set your heart on heaven?

### Set Your Mind on Heaven

Let's return to Colossians 3 now, and we're going to shift from the heart to the mind. Verse 2 says, **Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.** First, SET YOUR HEART ON things that are above and then, **SET YOUR MIND ON HEAVEN.** In these two verses we're dealing with two different words. Verse 1, the word "seek" was more closely tied to the heart and the soul. This second verb, "set your mind on," means consider, decide, resolve. And it has more to do with how we think. And so, with your heart turned toward Heaven, how should you think about this life?

There's a great illustration that we've used here at Grace before from a pastor named Francis Chan, and it's helpful for visualizing and setting our minds on what eternity is going to look like. *[Kevin holds a rope so we can see one end, which is red for a length of about one foot. The rest of the rope within view is white and we cannot see the other end of the rope.]* So, I've got this rope in my hands and it stretches on for eternity. I want you to imagine that this rope just goes on forever. Hey, you're not here, so as far as you know, this rope does go on forever. It leaves the worship center and it goes out the front doors of Grace and it turns the corner around the road and it starts heading down 183. It goes down toward Houston, past the Gulf of Mexico, into the southern hemisphere, and it loops around the Earth over and over again to infinity and beyond. This rope goes on forever.

Now imagine that this rope is a timeline. It's a timeline of your existence. And you are going to exist forever. And do you see this red taped part in my hand? This represents your time here on Earth. You've got a few years alive here and then you spend the rest of eternity

somewhere else. This is your mortal existence. This is one human life, this is the hyphen between the birth date and the death date on the tombstone.

And what so many of us do is we fixate on this red part; we fixate on this part of the rope. We say, “Here’s my life, I’ve got to work really hard, I’ve got to work, work, work, save, save, save, do all the right things, keep the focus on today, because it’s all about this life. And then once I get to these final two centimeters, that’s retirement and I can take a deep breath and pause. Phew! I made it. It was all worth it!”

Or we fall into this trap -- and I think it’s often a lie from Satan – and we use the word “later.” *I’ll just do it later – not now, but maybe then, over here. That’s when I’ll start “living for God.”* That’s when I’ll start thinking more about how I can use my time or my money or my resources for the kingdom of God. *But not right now. I can’t do it, so I’ll do it later.*

Or what I tend to do, maybe you do too, is I journey through this life with such a limited view of eternity and what this life really is. I’m lulled into this belief that I’m most at home here ...in this finite realm. And so, I worry and stress about this tiny red part here because it’s going to affect this little red part [*Kevin indicates two points on the red portion of the rope*] and I begin to lose sight of all of this [*Kevin indicates the white part of the rope*]! **But I’m meant to live like Heaven is real and like I know I’m going to live there forever – forever and ever.**

Because eternal life is our destiny. Philippians 3:20 tells us, **Our citizenship [meaning our real home, our real place] is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.** If you are a Christian, Heaven is home. And, setting our minds on things above, the truth of Heaven should cause us to re-examine the way that we think about and talk about this life and also how we think and talk about death.

Because Jesus did not defeat death so that we would continue to live in this overwhelming terror of dying. Scripture, the Bible, mocks death. It asks, *Where is its sting, where is its victory?* So, please hear me on this, Church: Jesus did not just escape death. Jesus conquered it. And in Him, in Heaven, we have that same triumph.

In the book *The Last Battle*, the finale of the Narnia series, the narrator, realizes he’s died and he’s entered into Heaven. And he exclaims, **I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land that I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now!** Heaven is home.

Set your mind on Heaven. That means that if you are a follower of Christ, you do not have to live in fear of death. Whether you're fifteen, twenty-five, forty-five, or seventy-five, you don't have to distance or distract yourself from the thought of dying. Because the way that we, ultimately, arrive at home is through death. So, it's appropriate to reflect on the fact that you are going to die. It's a heavenly paradigm shift to talk about life as temporary and Heaven as eternal. Because Jesus's death and resurrection and the everlasting life that He gives us reframe how we experience the transient things of this world. Take time to contemplate your mortality and the impermanence of this life and the reality of Heaven.

### Christ Is Our Life

We seek Heaven in our hearts, we set our minds on life after this. Then, Colossians tells us – here's the truth: **<sup>3</sup> For you have died [you've already died], and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.** You died, your life is hidden with Christ. Meaning your life is Christ's life. This is such a powerful verse and I'm telling you, if you can wrap your soul around this and let it saturate your identity, it will change how you live. You'll live like Heaven is real and like you know that you're going there.

Because Heaven, properly understood, doesn't make this life or this world less important. It actually gives us a reason to take this world and the people here and the mission of God in this world very seriously. C.S. Lewis put it well when he said, **“If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next.”**

You may have heard the phrase before, “He or she, they're so heavenly-minded, they're of no earthly good.” And I've got to tell you – that's just wrong. Because someone who is truly, truly heavenly-minded cannot help but live for earthly good as an outpouring of their faith in Christ. Because it's who you are.

Galatians 2:20 puts it perfectly, saying, **I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, [It's not me anymore, I no longer live] but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

Your heart, your mind, set on heaven, will inevitably affect how you live life on Earth. Your life is hidden with Christ. You've been crucified with Him. Christians – we no longer live. It's not “my life” or “your life” any longer. It's Christ's life within us. So, I can begin to live as if Jesus were living out my day. How would Jesus interact in my relationships, at work or home? How would Christ speak to my wife or my kids? How would Christ spend my money? How would Jesus utilize my free time? Because, here's the point – none of those things are mine. My life is no longer mine; it belongs to Christ who lives in me.

And if we live like that – if we look at our lives as not our own, but as Christ's – we're going to live differently. So, ask yourself, *How are you living Jesus's life through you here on earth? What are the things you're doing that will last into eternity?* This is the life-altering reality of Heaven. There's life after this. **You can live like Heaven is real and Christ lives in you.**

So, let's apply this now to two different areas of our lives. You can certainly introspect and apply it to other parts of your life, but today I want to focus on two areas that show us what we really treasure, what captivates our heart, and also what we think about most, what occupies our mind. Let's ask – How do you spend your money? And what do you do with your time?

There was a book written a few years ago by a couple of Harvard MBA's. They were at Harvard studying to get their degrees in business and along the way they became Christians. And they wrote this book called *God and Money*. Because when they found life in Christ it caused them to reevaluate everything, especially how they thought about money; but also, their life goals, their dreams, their hopes, their time. Because, with their lives in Christ, they began to treasure Heaven in their hearts and they began to think about eternity in their minds and it changed how they lived.

These two authors, in this book, said that when it comes to money and time, people have one of three different views and we usually fall into one of three different types. As I share these with you, try to identify which one that you are like currently. Which one is most like you right now? The first type they called the **Spender**. These people believe money or time's greatest value is adding enjoyment to today, right here, right now. And so, they spend their lives on the present. They seek the highest enjoyment in the moment. Their time is only their own, their money is for their goals and purposes. They might save some, but it's only to add pleasure to life on Earth. They spend their time maximizing today. That's Type 1. That's the spender.



Type 2 they called the **Saver**. Savers, in contrast, don't focus as much on today because their eyes are on the horizon, but it's usually out of fear. Because to them, money's greatest value is in providing safety, comfort and security. Time is to be used on things that will lead to safety or contentment later, tomorrow. So, they try to limit spending too much money or investing too much time in outward things or on other people, because they don't want to overextend or get hurt or run out, because saving equals security. That's the saver.

The third type, the book calls the **Steward**. And these people see assets – time, money, and the things that they have– as temporary, as gifts from God to be used in the brief time they have on Earth for the purposes of God. They see the red tape on the rope and they also see the rest of the rope. So, the steward will use money to provide for their family and they'll save responsibly for the future, but their attention isn't on those things. Their attention, their focus is on things above.

They use their time, some might say, irresponsibly, because they spend so much of it on other people, with other people, with their church. They use their money, some people might call it reckless, because they spend it on things that might not be tangible or have value here on Earth. And they give a lot of it away. **They live like Heaven is real and like they're know they're going there.** So, they use their time and money the way that they believe Christ would in their life.

And in light of the truth of Heaven, if you've been raised with Christ, we're called to live as stewards here on Earth. Because when you have life in Christ, Christ is your life. And Heaven becomes your reality. And you set your heart on things above and you desire Heaven.

And you set your mind there and you acknowledge that you're going to die, and there might not be a later, and that this world isn't all there is and it's certainly not home. **And when you live like Heaven is real and like you are certain that is your destiny and you're going to live there forever, then you can live as a steward in this world.**

Living like Heaven is real means that we can be generous with our time and our money. And I know, this is a time of fear and uncertainty. But I can tell you, it won't last. It won't. Because earthly things don't last, but eternity is forever. So be a steward, not just when it's easy, but when it's difficult. Spend and invest in things that are going to last, and place your treasure in Heaven. Maybe that means you spend less money on yourself or you don't make that purchase

because it only has temporary value. Or on the other hand, maybe you give more when everyone else is saving because, as a steward, you know that you're making an eternal investment.

For you, maybe living like Heaven is real means trusting God with your finances, with your money, and starting to tithe -- giving regularly to the Church, the bride of Christ, who Scripture says will last forever, will exist in Heaven. Maybe as a family, you refocus how you spend your money and on what. Parents, perhaps you sit down together with your kids and say – “Look, we are in Christ, Christ is in us. We are on a trajectory toward Heaven and so we're going to live like it.” And that might mean living differently. Pray about this with your kids, write down some things that you could spend less on. And then think of a number, think of a sum, and talk about how you're going to invest it, together as a family, into something eternal. Sponsor a missionary that you know or give generously to an orphanage or a ministry or to somebody in need. Pray together and seek an opportunity, with your money, to live like Heaven is real.

We can also be generous stewards of our time. Ask yourself, what are the time commitments that will last and which ones are only earthly? Your life is Christ's life, and are you spending all of your time on more heavenly things or more earthly ones? Are you saving all of your time because it's “your time”? Could you live like Heaven is real and steward the time that you have here?

What if you began to look for ways to live as Jesus lived? To invest your time the way that He did? Jesus spent His time loving God and loving people, ministering to people. And the second part --- I know, it seems difficult while we're all stuck in our homes and we don't have the opportunity to serve in our church or in a ministry. But the time that we do have right now is an opportunity that we may never have again.

We can either look at our current situation and our current circumstances as something to simply survive and get through; or perhaps we have been given an opportunity to spend our time on something, or rather, on someone, eternal. Could you call that family member that maybe you haven't talked to in a while? Renew that friendship, get to know your neighbors, the people in the apartment next to you or in the house down the street. Or parents, what about the eternal souls in your own home? What are ways right now that you could use your time to invest in someone who will last into eternity? Heaven is real, we can live like it in how we treat the people around us.

A worthwhile investment in eternity could be the relationship that you start or build or rebuild with someone, so that you can minister to them and love them like Jesus loves them. And you could spend your time praying for that person and caring for them – write them a note, reach out, film a video and send it to them, ask if they need help. Ask if you can pray for them. And ask for God to give you an opening or a chance to share the hope that you have in Christ with them. That is a heavenly stewardship of time, in this time.

Set your heart on Heaven and treasure the things that are above.

Set your mind on Heaven and know that this world is not your home and that your destiny, your eternity, stretches far beyond the here and now.

And know that your life is actually Christ's life through you. That is how we're meant to live in light of the truth of Heaven.

Grace, **let's live like Heaven is real and like we know we're going there.**

Would you please pray with me?

*Father, thank You for who You are and for Your Son. God, we have an eternity with You in heaven because of Jesus, because of His life and death and resurrection. And God, we thank You for that. And so, Father, we pray that our lives here would be reflections of that, that we would be mirrors of Christ through us. God, I'd ask that You would give us conviction. Help us to know the things that we treasure and help us to evaluate how we can treasure heaven. Father, compel us, show us, the areas of our lives that we need to turn over to You and live as though we know Heaven is real. Help us to do that this week, Father, and for the rest of our lives. We pray these things in Your name. Amen.*

Thank you, Grace. We will see you again next week and we can't wait to see you again in person one day. We are looking forward to that. Have a great Sunday!