

Isaiah 65:17-19
Good Shepherd
December, 2021
New Year's Eve

I remember well the day in 1973 when I was traveling from the south-western corner of Kansas to Wisconsin to marry Nancy. I drove almost 1,100 miles that day. I was tired! I didn't know where Manchester was. I had never seen her home. Nancy had given me directions and said to watch for a dusk to dawn light shining in the yard! It was dark. I knew I was lost. I was driving on CH X. I stopped once to see if they knew where the Silgmans were. I saw a dusk to dawn light. This could be the right place! I hoped this was the right place! It was the right place!

Our journey through life can be more difficult than a car ride from one place to another. For example, an accident occurs and a loved one finds that she will never walk again. Her family is very supportive, but the young woman is very worried. The Lord speaks to her through His Word. "You are precious to Me. I know this is difficult for you. Look forward to the time when the world will be the way I first made it, and life will be the way I always wanted it to be for you."

Sometimes children are left with only one parent in their lives and there is a great sense of loss. The Lord reaches down to them with His Word saying, "I know of your loss. I will never leave you; I will never forsake you. I will help you. One day life will be the way I always meant it to be for you."

Friends, we live in a sin-sick world, but God promises to love us. More than that, He gives us hope for the future. To His people, from His Word, the Lord calls out to us: Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. Be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create... That is what I am longing for, eternal life, which Jesus has won for us!

Our Lord's encouragement tonight is, **Look forward to a fabulous future.** A place where we will be happy to be with the Lord and where He will be happy to have us live with Him!

We are waiting for a spectacular new life. That doesn't mean that we can't enjoy our life here. There is much to enjoy, but it's not perfect and it doesn't last.

- *In our eternal home no one will miss the world we are living in now.*
- *In the new world God will make for us, we will enjoy life the way God intended in the first place.*
- *In the new world to come, we will be content and satisfied as we have never been before.*

We long for that kind of life, an always-happy life. It is often hard to live in a world which is suffering under the curse of sin. God doesn't promise to take away our pain, headaches and worries. But God promises, "Call on Me when you have trouble. I will take care of you. Don't worry! I am your God! Look forward to a fabulous future."

Sometimes your line of work might cause you to see the ugliness of what human beings can do to others. Jesus sees the ugliness in our life. He knows how it can discourage us. He speaks to us through His Word, "I love you! I am with you. I will take care of you. Look forward to your fabulous future!"

Sometimes we feel that we are not important to anyone in this life. People put us down and makes life miserable for us. Jesus speaks to us through His Word, "I'm here for you. I have loved you forever! Look forward to your future in My new creation. You will be happy there."

Just think, when the Lord returns in glory to take us home to heaven, He won't have any reason to be sad any more!

Scripture is a window to the heart of God. Genesis records that the Lord was grieved over the violence and unbelief before the Great Flood. God cared for Israel with powerful protection and

mighty miracles, yet, Israel rejected Him and broke God's heart. On Palm Sunday Jesus cried over Jerusalem because the people would not believe He was their Savior. The mighty God cares for us and cries for us and with us!

Jesus sees the way people sin against Him. He sees that people still reject the sacrifice He made for them when He paid for their sins. Jesus is still crying over the world today because of the wickedness and unbelief here. God says, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.

Jesus does not only grieve over rejection, He knows what it is like to face loss or pain. Jesus cried. He suffered with Mary and Martha when their brother, Lazarus, died. In Isaiah 63, we read that God, in all His people's distress, is also distressed. Then, here in Isaiah 65, the Lord says, "A time is coming when I will not have any reason to cry any more."

Listen to God: I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in My people; the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more. These words describe our fabulous future life in heaven!

In heaven evil is gone. Sorrow - gone. Wars – gone. Murders – gone. Terrorism – gone. Nursing homes – gone. Hospitals – gone. Funeral homes – gone. Hunger – gone. Sickness – gone. Bullying – gone. Alzheimers and arthritis – gone. Guilt because of sin – gone. Our minds cannot begin to imagine what God has planned for us in the future!

How can God be happy with sinful human beings in heaven? You know the answer! God has brought us to faith in Jesus, our Savior, by means of His Word and Sacraments. We are washed clean of all sin in the blood of the Lamb of God. We are now holy in God's sight!

Sometimes I don't feel holy. I have a sinful nature that loves to sin and there are too many times I do sin, in thought, word, and deed. I hate it when I sin! I hate Satan for trying to destroy my faith and

snatch my hope for heaven away from me!

If God had not taken me by the hand and led me to the cross to look with faith on my dying Savior, I would have no hope at all!

We, who still breathe the air of this sinful world, ought to turn to our Savior and thank Him daily for His salvation!

Dear Christian, when you are depressed and feel like a failure, look at Jesus standing on the battle field of the cross and the grave. Remember: Jesus won! Because of Jesus we will be in heaven. Jesus will bring us to our new home and we will be happy because sin is gone, death is gone and worry is gone. Jesus will be happy because we are there with Him!

Life in eternity will never be boring!

Isaiah describes our entry into glory: They will enter Zion with joyful shouts, and everlasting joy will crown their heads. Happiness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will disappear. What a great day that will be!

Soon 2021 will be over! Good! With each passing minute, day, and year, we are closer to our new, fabulous home. Life will soon be what God always intended it to be.

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