

Psalm 145:1-5, 18-22; Luke 20:27-38

Saint Paul's Episcopal Church

9 November 2025

In nomine...

One of the questions that I am often asked is “what happens after we die?” It is not a ridiculous, our faith is grounded in the hope of eternal life that has been won for us through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. I strive, sometimes more successfully than at other times, not to be a terribly judgmental person—but I must admit that I have heard some quite silly, if not ridiculous assertions about what happens when we die. I am rather certain that heaven does not have a golf course. Or a lake to go fishing in. Or private rooms to hang out with our family and friends. Perhaps the most disappointing thing is that I am quite certain that we will not be able to queue up and ask God all our burning questions. As much as we would like to know why bad things happen to good people – or why cats seem so disinterested in us during the day, but at night need constant attention; I do not think that is how we are going to spend our time in heaven. There are many things that bring us joy in this life that will fade in the next.

There are those in our day, like there were in Jesus' day, who will say if the things that you love so much are not going to be features of your hoped for resurrected life—then what is the point? Why give up on any pleasures in this life to attain something other than our own images of heaven?

Why work for a heaven that is anything other than total freedom and free choice? But it is all sophistry and straw man arguments. Just like our reading today. The Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection and wanted to work to decrease the belief of others. The levirate marriage that they describe, that is described in Genesis and Deuteronomy, was not a feature of Jesus' day, but it was a convenient tool to try and make him look foolish. Often the Sadducees, historical or modern day, know our texts better than we do. And they use them to make us look foolish.

For all the comfort that it may bring us, Jesus does not promise us 18 holes at Augusta National or on the Old Course. There is no promise of a little stream teeming with native brook trout or time to finally read all those books we hoped to read or a chance to have that conversation that we wish we would have had. We are not promised any of that. We are promised that all our tears will be wiped away. We are promised that where he is, there we will be also. We are promised that life is changed, not ended.

At the end of our lesson today, get a hint at what the next life is going to be like. The King James reads, “For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.” In heaven we will live to God. We will live with God. We will live for God. What does heaven look like? It is hard to tell you, but I can show you. We are almost there, it is so close. Heaven is all of God's children gathered, to sing and to pray and to feast.

Heaven is giving thanks and being fed, even when we do not deserve it. Heaven is the fullness of all things. Here in the Eucharist, we enter heaven. Plain and simple and beautiful beyond our understanding. In the Eucharist we are fed and loved. We are strengthened and comforted. We are welcomed and adored, by the One who is and who was and who ever shall be.

You might ask how we get there? Through love. Through the love of God in Jesus Christ. Through the hard road of the cross, that is in fact the way of life. We there by setting aside our narcissistic tendencies and offering the whole of our being to the Lord of life. We get there through the waters of baptism.

You might ask how we stay there? We learn to give thanks. Not just in the easy moments, in the moments where the sun is warm and the breeze is cool—but in the moments where all seems lost. We strive to give thanks constantly, always exalting our God our King. We ponder the splendor of his majesty. We come here as often as possible to taste and see that the Lord is good.

You might ask how we bring this reality out into the world? A world where the poor are having food taken from their plates. A world where our siblings in Christ live in constant fear for their lives. A world where hate and anger and distrust are rampant. How do we bring heaven into this world? We begin by dying to this world. Let it have no authority over you. We reject the works of the devil. Ignore his attempts to make you hate.

We take what we experience in the heavenly banquet and do likewise. We feed the hungry. We clothe the naked. We give water to the thirsty.

This is a parish with a big heart. Filled with love for one another and with love for all of God's children. A parish where the least, the lost, and the behind will be welcomed and loved and cared for. A parish where the division between heaven and earth is muddled, where we do not know whether we stand in this life or the next. And for that I give thanks. Thanks to you, thanks to those who came before, and thanks to those who will be here when we are all reposed in the Lord. But most of all we give thanks to the Lord of hosts who is faithful and just.

Let our mouths speak his praise this day and may all flesh bless his holy Name for ever and unto the ages of ages.

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