

“Happiness Reserved for Heaven”  
(Revelation 21:3-4)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Why is it that things never work out the way we want them to?
  - a. Why, children, does it rain when you want to go out and play?
  - b. Why can't you get your homework done when you have the opportunity to do something special?
  - c. Why does your Lego kit almost always have a piece missing?
  - d. Why, when there's a fly in house, does it land on your food?
  - e. Why, when the desert is served, you get the smallest portion?
  - f. Parents, why do the stop lights usually turn against you when you're in a hurry?
  - g. Why do you struggle financially more than your friends?
  - h. Why does it seem that there's always someone who can do something better than you?
  - i. For Chuck: why do so many congregations seem to be at peace, but we seem to get the ones full of problems?
  - j. This doesn't happen just to us, but to everyone.
    - (i) It's called Murphy's Law.
      - (a) "If anything can go wrong, it will."
      - (b) "If there is a possibility of several things going wrong, the one that will cause the most damage will be the one to go wrong."
      - (c) "Murphy's Law of Thermodynamics: Things get worse under pressure."
      - (d) "Murphy's Constant: Matter will be damaged in direct proportion to its value."
      - (e) Murphy's Philosophy: "Smile . . . tomorrow will be worse" (Murphy's Law Site).
    - (ii) Sadly, this seems to be all too true.
    - (iii) But especially for the Christian.
    - (iv) Some offer to come to Christ and all your problems will be over?
    - (v) But are they?
    - (vi) Why not?
2. It has to do with the reason God made us and called us.
  - a. Remember the goal of the Christian is the beatific vision: to see God in the face of Christ.
    - (i) The only way to reach that goal is by following Scripture.
    - (ii) But knowing isn't enough; we must also desire it.
    - (iii) And we must desire it earnestly: like violent men trying to take a city (Matt. 11:12).

- b. This morning, we'll look at a powerful incentive that God gives to seek things above.
- c. I started thinking about it again when I thought about Scotty's funeral.
  - (i) It reminded me that death comes for all of us.
  - (ii) That our time in this world will end: the sands of time are sinking.
  - (iii) That our true happiness isn't here; we mustn't expect it here.
  - (iv) If it was, it wouldn't be that valuable, since we couldn't hold onto it for very long.

## B. Preview.

1. The point is that Lord has provided something better.
  - a. God doesn't want us to find complete happiness here.
    - (i) There are blessings.
    - (ii) But they are all mixed blessings.
  - b. The reason is He wants us to look forward.
    - (i) To the perfect blessing.
    - (ii) One that is unmixed with sorrow.
2. Our text reminds us of this.
  - a. It reminds us that one day God will dwell with His people.
  - b. And He will then banish all sorrow and bring perfect happiness.
3. I want us to see three things this morning:
  - a. The Lord has provided blessings for us here.
  - b. But they are mixed with things to spoil them.
  - c. The reason is that God has reserved our full and complete happiness for heaven, so we should not look for it here, but there.

## II. Sermon.

- A. The Lord has given us blessings in this life.
  1. Health: energy, strength, stamina.
  2. Relative safety: protection from war, from criminals.
  3. Relationships: family, friends, marriage, children, body of Christ.
  4. Accomplishments: educational degrees, athletic feats, musical performances, artistic creations, etc.
  5. Possessions: needs, homes, cars, recreational/items for enjoyment, toys.
  6. Spiritual: the Word, worship, prayer, sacraments, fellowship, indwelling of Spirit/foretaste of glory.
- B. But these blessings are mixed with sorrow.
  1. For everything given, there is something to spoil it:
    - a. Either our sin.
    - b. Or the effects of sin on the creation.
    - c. Whose health isn't threatened by stress, sickness, injury or age?

- d. Whose safety hasn't been threatened by weather, earthquakes, war, or other?
  - d. What relationship is free from conflict?
  - e. What worthwhile accomplishments don't cost great time and effort; the sense of that accomplishment wears off?
  - f. What possession doesn't lose its appeal, deteriorate, tarnish, lose its value? Ultimately they all will. Who hasn't felt threatened by poverty/want?
  - g. What spiritual blessing do we have that isn't lessened by our struggles with our own sins or by trials, tribulation and persecution?
  - h. Every blessing is mixed with some sorrow.
2. Ultimately, we must let go of whatever happiness we have in this life.
- a. When we die.
  - b. All our relations: they are only for this life.
  - c. All our possessions: you can't take them with you.
  - d. All our accomplishments: they only have meaning in this life.
  - e. At least, we must let go of the things we didn't use, give or do for the glory of God.
  - f. We must let go of those loved ones not in heaven.
  - g. But not our spiritual blessings, since they are the down payment.
  - h. But again, why has God made it this way?
- C. It's because God has reserved the true happiness for us in heaven:
1. That much is obvious from our text: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away'" (Rev. 21:3-4).
- a. This is the New Heavens and Earth; but the same is true of heaven now.
  - b. The Lord will be with His people: beatific vision.
  - c. He will remove everything else that can take away our happiness.
  - d. Then we will be swallowed up in His love.
    - (i) We will be like so many jars cast into an ocean of love, filled to the full with His love and happiness.
    - (ii) "All shall be perfectly happy, every one shall be perfectly satisfied" (Edwards, "The Portion of the Righteous").
2. Why has He reserved this happiness for heaven?
- a. Because now is not the time for us to enjoy it:
    - (i) Edwards: "It has sometimes looked strange to me that men should be ever brought to such exceeding happiness as that of heaven seems to be, because we find that here providence will not suffer any great degree of happiness: when men have something in which they hope to find very great joy, there will be something to spoil it. Providence seems watchfully to take care they should have no exceeding joy and satisfaction in this world. But indeed this, instead of being one argument against the

greatness of heaven's happiness, seems to argue for it. For we cannot suppose that the reason why providence will not suffer men to enjoy great happiness here is that he is averse to the creature's happiness, but because this is not a time for it. To everything there is an appointed season and time, and this agreeable to God's method of dispensation, that a thing should be sought in vain out of its appointed time. God reserves happiness to be bestowed hereafter, that is the appointed time for it, and that is the reason he does not give it now. No man, let him be never so strong or wise, shall alter this divine establishment by anticipating happiness before his appointed time. It is so in all things. Sometimes there is an appointed time for man's prosperity upon earth, and then nothing can hinder his prosperity; and then when that time is past, then comes an appointed time for his adversity, and then all things conspire for his ruin, and all his strength and skill shall not help him. History verifies this with respect to many kings, generals, and great men: one while they conquer all and nothing can stand before them (all things conspire for their advancement, and all that oppose it are confounded), and after a while it is right the reverse. So has it been with respect to the kingdoms and monarchies of the world: one while is their time to flourish, and then God will give all into their hands and will destroy those that oppose their flourishing, and then after that comes the time of their decay and ruin and then everything runs backward, and all helpers are vain. Jer. 27 (MS 585).

(ii) Now is not the time; God has reserved this happiness for heaven.

b. Secondly, God withholds it now, so that we won't hold onto this world.

(i) Burroughs: "God, says Bernard, has not cast us out of paradise to seek another paradise in this world. No, we are born to labor. Why do you seek the living among the dead? Why do you seek for living comforts, when you must expect to die daily? It is only heaven that is above all winds, storms, and tempests; rest must be after labor. Our rest is the crown of our labor; to seek it here is to seek it preposterously [before its time]. Why do you require that in one place (says Ambrose) which is due in another? Why would you preposterously have the crown before you have overcome? Imagine the most settled condition you can in this world, and even if you had it, yet it would be but vanity. So says the psalmist in Ps. 39:5; 'Man in his best estate is vanity.' The original is, 'In his settled estate he is vanity'; not only vain, but vanity itself. It was a heavy charge that Saint James laid upon some in Jas. 5, that they lived in pleasure upon the earth. It is as if he said that earth is not the place for pleasure; this is the place of sorrow, of trouble, mourning, and affliction. Thus Abraham charged Dives; in your lifetime, says he, you had your pleasure. The emphasis lies there, in your lifetime. That should not have been the time. Let us take heed that we be not too hasty in seeking our rest, pleasure and delight; we may perhaps have a little for a while to the flesh. And because we will not be content with that condition that God hath appointed for His people, here we may lose our part in that glorious eternal rest which God

has prepared for His people hereafter. Seek for that which you do, namely for rest, but do not seek for it where you do; if we seek our rest in this world even though we meet with so many troubles in it, what would we do if the Lord should let us prosper? Behold (saith an ancient), the world is troublesome, and yet it is loved; what would it be if it were peaceable? You embrace it though it is filthy; what would you do if it were beautiful? You cannot keep your hands from the thorns, how earnest would you be in gathering the flowers?" (*Day by Day*, 265).

- (ii) We are not to find our happiness here or now, but we are to look forward for it.

### III. Application.

#### A. Now is not the time for our complete happiness.

1. Are you looking for it here?
  - a. In your relationships: friendships, family, marriage, parenting?
  - b. In your accomplishments: educational, musical, athletics, financial, artistic?
  - c. In your possessions: cars, homes, whatever you treasure?
  - d. In your spiritual growth?
2. You won't find it here, at least completely.
  - a. God gives a measure of happiness in all these things for His people.
  - b. But all of these things are mixed with something to spoil them.

#### B. That happiness is only in heaven.

1. Do you believe this?
2. If so, then don't expect it here.
  - a. This is a time of labor, trials, persecutions, trouble.
  - b. Everything ointment has its fly.
3. Instead, seek that happiness above.
  - a. Set your eyes on heaven.
  - b. Know that to depart and be with Christ is very much better (Phil. 1:23).
  - c. Again, believe this, and this will place your heart where it needs to be.
  - d. This is what Christ did: for the joy set before Him, endured the cross (Heb. 12:2).
  - e. As we come to the table, let's be reminded that this is what He calls us to.