



St. Michael's Church  
CHARLESTON, SC

EASTER SUNDAY

*FROM EARTHLY LAYOVER TO  
HEAVENLY MAKEOVER*

SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 2020

Colossians 3:1-4, MATTHEW 28:1-10

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT  
BECOME YOUR DISCIPLES AND THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,  
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,  
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.

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Alleluia...Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen Indeed! Alleluia

I love the story of a priest and an Uber Driver who both die and go to heaven. St. Peter at the gates is waiting for them and says Come with me. Peter takes them to a gorgeous mansion and says to the driver, Here is your eternal home. The priest is thinking if he gets the mansion, I can't wait to see what I get. But Peter leads the priest to a rugged old house with a bunk bed and an old tv set saying, here you are. 'Wait, I think you got it wrong', says the priest. 'Shouldn't I be the one who gets the mansion? After all I led your flock and preached God's word!' 'Yes, that's true, says Peter, But during your sermons people slept. When the Uber driver drove, people prayed!

Oh my friends, in this Coronavirus pandemic, we need to laugh a little more. It's such a heavy time isn't it! The loss of people, and dreams. I think here of those

- Dying alone with no family at their bedside;
  - the loss of never saying goodbye.
- And our fear, what if I'm next?
  - Am I having an allergic reaction to the pollen or is it Covid-19!
- I think of other forms of anxiety and loss...the loss of:
  - Jobs and money..
  - Losing out on the wedding of one's dreams
  - The graduation celebration..
  - Grandparents never being able to hug their grandchildren.

My friends, reflect with me. Where in your life have you experienced loss from the Coronavirus? We need lighthearted moments, because if we're not careful, our eyes become so fixed on news apps and news channels we get paralyzed in fear and loss.

Which is why we need Easter! Easter is God's megaphone to rouse the world! God yelling: FEAR NOT! I am in Charge. Take your eyes off the horizontal and look up to me! Colossians 3...Set your mind on things above!

Echoing Billy Graham who said, "My home is in heaven, I'm just travelling through this world." Meaning, this life we're living in is nothing more than a lay-over! Like flying from here to Honolulu, going through Atlanta. Our earthly life is like an Atlanta layover. An average Atlanta layover lasts 90 minutes. An average layover on earth is about 20,000 days. Easter is God's megaphone, God saying, Look up! Realize you're on a layover!

Which is why we need Easter! Easter makes our salvation, makes our heavenly makeover, possible!

So today...., from earthly layover to heavenly makeover, I want to explore what Easter has produced. On this Easter day, I'm going to tell you what heaven looks like, who escorts us there, and what we'll do there. Heaven, after all, is a real place mentioned over 500 times in Scripture.

But first, you must understand that our entrance to heaven is possible only because of the Easter resurrection. NO EASTER RESURRECTION. NO HEAVEN.

Adam and Eve, by their sin, bring death into the world. Up to that point, all humans were to never die. But after that original sin, we were, and are, all condemned to eternal death - HELL.

The Easter Resurrection is Jesus reversing what Adam and Eve did. Jesus, out of the purest love for us we could imagine, takes all our sin on Himself. He dies on that Good Friday cross, leaves our sin in hell, and on Easter morning is raised to His Father in Heaven at the Easter Resurrection. Thereby opening heaven's gate for you and me! As Dr. David Jeremiah puts it, Jesus died not only for us, but as us, so we might live forever with Him! It's why we sing out loud!

- *He is risen he is Risen,*
  - ***HE** hath opened heavens gate...*
- *We are free from sins's dark prison*
  - *Risen to a holier state...*

Easter is the event that brings every believing heart on earth to heaven! So, from this layover, let's scour heaven together, with a confession before we go.

LORD, forgive the church Lord, for not talking more about heaven! Rob Reinow in last week's St. Michael's town hall zoom call said we're not talking enough about heaven! Our children need to know more about heaven! So, children, this sermon is for you! All children watching this at home, pay attention. Buckle up, here we go.

Heaven. It's a real place, a gorgeous place! Described in Revelation, "Heaven shone with the Glory of God, Heaven's brilliance was that of a precious jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal! Made of gold as pure as glass. Glorious beyond imagination! But even more intimately, Jesus has gone before us to personally prepare our place there. The Bible Says so. John 14: Jesus says, In my Father's house are many mansions. I'm going to prepare a place for you there. A physical place in God's dwelling place where angels work and live.

I recall the story of the Rev. Richard Sigmund. He was in a car crash in 1974, went into a coma, and had a vision of heaven. In His book, **My Time in Heaven**, he writes, I saw an avenue containing mansions beyond compare, architecture beyond imagination. The biggest mansions I was told were reserved for the missionaries, all they'd given returned 100 fold! And none had locks, all doors were open. There were no thieves.

Okay, how do we get from here to there? The Bible is very clear about this. On our final layover on earth day, when we walk through that gate to heaven we will not walk alone. God actually sends an escort! Luke 16 tells us that God sends angels to transport us to heaven! When Lazarus dies, angels come to carry him home! In other words, we won't be traveling alone but with angels who will carry us there. An eternal friendly Uber service if you will!

Okay, next question about our destination. What happens to our bodies? The Bible says our bodies go into the grave or urn on our last layover day, but our souls go to heaven. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, “Be of good courage, and prefer to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord...”. But then, in the second coming of Jesus, at His Rapture, Christ is going to come, the trumpet will sound, and those in heaven will be given their new-MADEOVER and permanent heavenly bodies first, followed by the same for those on earth. 1 Corinthians 15: “In the twinkling of an eye, our bodies will be raised...” What a makeover that will be!

Personally, in my new body, I am going to order one that will look like Tom Brady, without his Buccaneer uniform, and without my bald spot. Seriously, Scripture says our new made-over bodies will resemble the resurrected Body of Jesus Christ.

So, Heaven is a place. Angels escort us there. After a time, we will be given new Resurrected Bodies!

Next big question. What will we do in Heaven?\_I mean, we can sing A Mighty Fortress only so many times! Let me give you three reasons heaven will be anything but boring.

The chief reason it won't be boring is that we will be immersed in the shekinah glory of God! We will know and be with Jesus! The same Jesus who walked on the Sea of Galilee, the same Jesus who healed Dead Lazarus, the same Jesus who died and Rose Again! WE WILL BE WITH HIM! The Bible says His glory will be so great, we won't need light, His glory will shine throughout heaven!

The second reason Heaven will not be boring. You're walking in heaven when around the bend, there is Billy Graham. Down by the Celestial lake is C. S. Lewis! On the other side, J.R. Tolkien! Over there, reading on the park bench, there is Old Testament Ruth. Boring, are you kidding!

Back to The Rev. Richard Sigmund. Sigmund recounts walking in heaven and coming upon the largest organ he had ever seen, being played by none other than Johann Sebastian Bach, supported by choirs of heaven joining in praise and worship! Imagine! Breakfast with Mary the mother of Jesus, lunch with Moses and Lot with a side of manna and salt, and dinner with Johnny Cash. Think about it!

But let's get more personal. Imagine the moment you see your Grandparents, great grandparents and great-great-great-great-grandparents! Then your momma, your daddy, your son, your daughter, who died at too young an age. Close your eyes and imagine that reunion. I'm visualizing the reunion between my wife and her biological father. Heaven boring? Not a chance. The glory of God. The Massive Reunion

Third, we will never be bored because we will be living our highest calling. In Matthew 25, Jesus says, “Well done good and faithful servant, you were faithful over a few things, I will now make you ruler over many things...enter the Joy of your Lord.”

Randy Alcorn, in his text book on heaven writes, “Heaven is where our best work will always be ahead of us because our minds will never fade and we will never lack resources! It will never go wrong because we will not be able to sin!

Heaven will be so thrilling! The Shekinah glory of God. The Massive Reunion. Living our highest calling! Heaven, our place of total makeover. A beautiful place beyond compare. Mansion provided, escorted by Angels. Anything but boring.

Easter. It’s the lever that brings every believing heart from our earthly layover to our heavenly MAKEOVER!

And sometimes I wonder, as we stripped our altar on Maundy Thursday. I wonder if Jesus is stripping everything away from us to make us realize again, we’re living for the wrong world. Think about it. Who else could supernaturally shut down every sport, school, economy, job, and entertainment around the globe. So we would realize what Holocaust survivor Corrie TenBoom told us years ago, “You will never know that Jesus is all you need, until Jesus is all you have.”

Jesus on this Easter Day in quarantine is saying stop living for the layover, keep seeking things above! Live for heaven so you can do more earthly good! It’s why C.S. Lewis would write, The More Heavenly minded we become, the more Earthly Good we are!

Why? Expecting our Heavenly Makeover means there is nothing on earth we can’t handle, because we know this layover is temporary! We don’t need to stress! We can hold on to people and even things loosely, because we know we will be getting an eternal heavenly makeover with them for all eternity! We can relax, not fearing our final day. It is in fact why Christianity exploded in the Roman Empire. Christianity quadrupled during the ancient plagues and pandemics, because the Christians knew this life was not all there was, and so they stayed and helped people in the deathly cities when all the pagan medics escaped to the country! The Christians weren’t afraid to die during layover! They knew their makeover was coming!

Meaning what we think about Easter and heaven determines how we live today and through this quarantine. There are two things we can’t do in heaven:

1. Sin
2. And Evangelize

We cannot evangelize. By then everyone in heaven will be there! Therefore this layover is all about helping others get to their heavenly makeover. Using time in the Easter quarantine to:

- call on people
- Connect the church to the disconnected

- To Speak peace without fear of death
- To Speak of heaven boldly!

But Finally on this Easter Sunday, the true sobering news is that there is a heaven, there is a hell, and the Heavenly promise of Easter is not automatic. The Bible says there is a book, a registry called the Lamb's book of life. The names of all who will be in heaven are recorded in that one book. Your name doesn't get into the book by being:

- A good person
- Doing nice things for people
- Or even just being kind.

Easter guarantees that everyone who has confessed their sin, saying Jesus, Forgive me, and accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior will be recorded in this book. It's just what the Bible says. They who believe in me, will never die. Heaven and Hell are real places. Therefore Easter reminds us that we can't put off the decision. Each of us has to make the decision for ourselves.

It's the reason one of my favorite recreational books is called: **Skyfaring** by Mark Vanhoenacker. It's the story of his life as a 747 pilot. In it, Vanhoenacker describes landing a plane in dense fog. As the plane descends, a voice comes over the cockpit...

- One thousand feet
- 5 hundred feet
- 400 hundred feet..

At the same time, another voice comes on: DECIDE. DECIDE.

It's called the decision altitude where the pilot literally has to DECIDE between actually engaging the landing gear or doing a fly-over. The Pilot in that moment has to decide between sky...or...earth.

We have the same decision, between holding on to this life our earthly layover, or today, our Easter born Heavenly destination. DECIDE. Please pray with me, children as well, please join me.

Lord, I give you my clinched hands full of loss, anxiety, fear, and dread, and I look up to my future home and say Jesus I'm opening my clinched hands to give it all to you. Forgive me of my sin. I believe in you Jesus. I believe in you. Help me love you and your bride the church. Prepare me from my earthly layover for my heavenly makeover. In Jesus' Name, Amen.