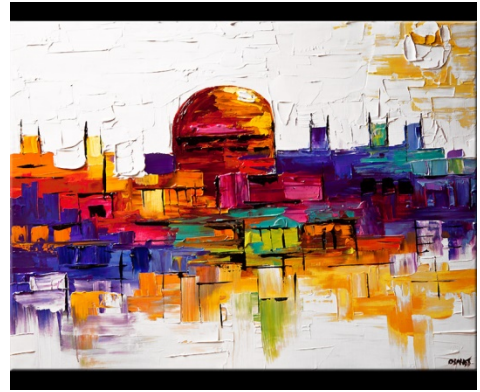


St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
June 19, 2016
Isaiah 65:17-19 and 24-25
Pentecost 5. Eisenach Series



New Heavens and a New Earth

¹⁷ “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. ¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. ²⁴ Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the LORD.

People of God~rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

I will be the first to admit I don’t know very much about concrete. I helped put in the driveway by my house. I dug out the rocky topsoil and fill. I spread the gravel inside the wooden frame. I helped spread the concrete inside the frame. And then I watched as people much more skilled than I am – smoothed the concrete – woosh, woosh, woosh, woosh – on the top. And then you wait – for days and days while it cured! All the chemicals work – to make this light grey colored slab you can park on. Most of the concrete in Watertown is actually called Portland cement. And so? Now – the other day I was by where they were taking out a corner curb that was fatally cracked. They dug all around it. And then they took this massive saw – and cut the concrete into small chunks that you could pick up and throw away. There was this huge cloud of dust everywhere. The problem is – if you are anywhere near – this cement dust is in the air! Close your mouth! Cover your nose! If you were the guy with the saw wouldn’t you wear some kind of mask? Think for a moment – where does all that dust go? In your lungs? All those particles in the moist little pockets in your chest! What must surely happen next? You get concrete in your chest – where oxygen is supposed to be! That can’t be good! So – should I be walking through that cloud of dust to tell the guy with the saw that he needs one of those little masks – to filter at least some of that dust so it doesn’t go into his lungs? Or is that a fool’s errand? I don’t know! If there is someone I know – who doesn’t know Jesus died for them – so they can go to Heaven – I know for sure what to do. I need to tell them about Jesus – and to tell them now – before it’s too late! Today God’s Word reminds us:

I Can Only Imagine Heaven!

I. The painful past will not be remembered

II. Jesus will make everything new.

The part of God’s Word we are concentrating on – is from the second to last chapter of the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah. When I was little I used to think – if we had a pastor like the Apostle Paul – a preacher like Isaiah then surely the church would be packed with people who came to listen to the Gospel. When you get a little older – you hopefully realize that the

effectiveness of the Gospel does not depend on the skill – the oratorical ability of the person making the sermon. When you get a little older you realize that often times the most faithful preachers of the Gospel in Bible times – were met with the most stubborn hearts. The LORD called Isaiah to **“go and tell this people: ‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’ Make the heart of this people calloused.”** (Isaiah 6:9-10)

Calloused! In Dundee I had a sheep named Greg. Greg was a butcher – a meat cutter. Greg used to cut meat all day long – to the point that the butcher knives he used made a callous that covered the better part of the palm of his hand. It was hard and dead and unfeeling – like the ♥s of more and more of the children of Israel. The time came when there was only a small hand full of believers – a small remnant of people who by the grace of God – heard and believed the Gospel promises of God!

It was to this faithful remnant that Isaiah preached good news! ¹⁷ **“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. New** is a very powerful word – *new!* One of the things you do if you are a pastor is visit people. We visit you in the hospital – when you are born. I make it a point to shake your hand when you are a little newborn – wearing a seasonal stocking hat – a *punkin* head around thanksgiving – a candy corn if you are born around Reformation – red white and blue if you are born around the 4th of July – and so? I take your tiny hand and shake it and tell you, “Jesus loves you!” I “shake” your hand – I touch your hand when you are in the casket – the last chance to “shake” your hand – and it’s always cold! Between that first handshake and the last – *we wear out*. Eyes that can see so clearly – need glasses thicker and thicker – bifocals and trifocals and eventually we stop trying. Our teeth come in – and before you know it – they are pulling out your wisdom teeth – they become sensitive to cold and hot. Our hearing is very good and we love music! When we are very little we go to weddings and dance! I love the little people in their pink and sparkly dresses – little men wearing vests and little clip on ties – in their stocking feet. And they play Bob Seager singing, “Gimme that old time rock’n roll” and they just bounce during the cow bell part – as happy as people are this side of Heaven. And before you know it – we sit at weddings and you know you are old – when you complain, “Why do they insist on playing that music so loudly?! You can’t even visit!” When we get to Heaven no one will wear hearing aids. No one will complain the music is too loud! We will celebrate the music that gives glory to God – when we hear 10,000 times 10,000 angels singing to Jesus our Redeemer from all sin and all guilt!

The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. Former things – I remember some 36 years ago I remember saying, “Randy – do you take Cheri here present to be your wedded wife...Cheri do you take Randy here present to be your wedded husband...I now pronounce you husband and wife.” We were standing in front of a very small altar with a statue of Jesus his hands raised in perpetual blessing just above me. Less than 10 years later – we got a phone call that said Randy had murdered his wife Cheri – then turned the deer rifle on himself. They were both dead – while their 3 little boys up in the woods behind their trailer house – called their grandpa! I remember two little boys sliding down a hill in the snow – toward a country road nobody ever drove on. Just as they were coming down the hill here came a car. No problem! Just bail – just roll off the sled into the soft snow. One little boy bailed. One didn’t. The person driving saw him and slammed on the brakes. The car spun around him – and hit him on the way back. Little Kelli was 1 year 9 months and 21 days old. She was playing with her cousins in the front yard. Her mommy with a baby in her tummy saw all the children

running toward the highway. She shouted for them to stop. Everyone stopped except little Kelli – down into the ditch – up on the gravel shoulder – just a step onto the black top. A little grandpa driving by never saw her... Enough! Enough! The moment I step into Heaven I will never ever remember the thousand sad things I have seen in the past. I will never remember a miscarried baby. I will never remember an aborted baby. I will never remember a crib death. I will never remember the siren of the EMS coming as fast as they can – alas – too late to save someone. I will never remember being in the ICU when they turn off all the noisy machines – and a ♥ stops. I will never remember being at the cemetery when someone presents a flag folded into a triangle of blue with white stars precisely stitched – *on behalf of a grateful nation* – a sharp stiff – slow salute. The painful hurtful mistakes of the past are all forgiven and they will not be remembered. They will not come to mind!

¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. Last Sunday we went to a Pastor's retirement. More than once it was said it was a bitter/sweet occasion. Back in the day – often when Pastors retired they were given a going away present of a trip to Israel. I always thought that was very generous – but a little bit backwards! After 40 years of preaching and teaching – now – pastors would go and see the places they had talked about for so long. It is a blessing to see old Jerusalem – ballpark 3,000 years old. Tuesday was Flag Day. It has only been 240 years since 1776 and Jerusalem is 3,000 years old! You can never forget the hills outside Bethlehem – creamy rock – with little patches of green grass and cool sweet still ponds of water. Go around Christmas time – and the little lambs are born with fat little tails – part of thank-offerings. Go at Christmas time and remember that the angel said to the shepherds, **"Fear not – for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people – for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord!"** Go to the Jordan River where John the Baptist called people to **repent**. Go out into the wilderness where there is only creamy rock – where the little cony bears – the little rock badgers live – where the devil tempted Jesus to turn the stones into bread.

Go to Nazareth and have homemade chicken soup and pita bread and figs and oranges and pickled fish and olives and sweet wine. See the cliff where they wanted to push Jesus over the edge. Go to Capernaum where Jesus healed so many – drove out demons – did so many miracles that if he had done them in Sodom and Gomorrah they would have repented. But the people of Capernaum did not repent. Would Capernaum be lifted up? No, she would be brought down! All that remains of her today is the foundation of the synagogue – a couple of rows of mill stones for grinding grain and pressing olives for their oil and the exposed basement of a house – that's it! Walk down winding path down the Mount of Olives – wave a palm branch – sing to the praise of our humble King. Go to the Garden of Gethsemane and you can literally lean against a pudgy olive tree and pray. Go outside the city wall of Old Jerusalem and you can see a hillside – shaped like a skull – the creases in the rock like the creases on the forehead – the deep dark holes – like where the eyes and the nose are on a skull – the mouth with broken teeth. Around the corner from the skull is a tomb – with 3 platforms – room to put dead bodies. The small door – that you need to bend down to see into – has a round stone – that could be rolled to open it – rolled to close it! Here in Old Jerusalem – the place where the Lamb of God was put to death on the ⚡ to rescue us from sin and guilt. Old Jerusalem is just that – old, scarred from all the times armies surrounded her and attacked her – and her stone streets were stained with blood. It's an old city – dirty and scared – a place of death. The New Jerusalem is a place of light and life and love and hope and joy and peace and rejoicing forever!

²⁴ Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. ²⁴ Before they call I will answer... Uncle Keith and Aunt Judy were out to eat with some friends in Fond du Lac when Aunt Judy said she didn't feel well and needed to go home! Uncle Keith went to get her coat – and before he could get back to her – she had collapsed. Somebody cried out, “Call 911!” And immediately someone else called out, “You don't need to call 911!” Why was that? “They are already here! The EMS guys and their truck in just across the street. Just open the door and call to them. They are already here!” Before you call I will answer! Before anybody knew they needed the EMS – they were pulling up to the scene. Wave and cry out and they will bring their equipment across the street and help! It happens all the time. There was a doctor who helped take care of premies! Years ago he took care of a little baby just 3 ½ pounds. That doctor was in a terrible accident – trapped in a crushed SUV – when the EMS came to pull him to safety – it was that little 3 ½ pound premie all grown up! Jesus takes care of our physical needs. He takes care of our spiritual needs. He takes our sins away and he takes us home to Heaven. We have nothing to fear for Jesus' sake. And so again we say, “Thank you, Jesus!” Amen!

To God alone all glory!

