

Saints Triumphant
November 17, 2019
Christ the Rock Evangelical Lutheran Church
Farmington, New Mexico

Isaiah 65:17-25 “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.

20 “Never again will there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not live out his years;
the one who dies at a hundred
will be thought a mere child;
the one who fails to reach a hundred
will be considered accursed.

21 They will build houses and dwell in them;
they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

22 No longer will they build houses and others live in them,
or plant and others eat.

For as the days of a tree,
so will be the days of my people;
my chosen ones will long enjoy
the work of their hands.

23 They will not labor in vain,
nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune;
for they will be a people blessed by the Lord,
they and their descendants with them.

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.

“At Peace in Your Perfect Home”

Jim and Sheryl had been looking forward to retirement for years. His job had taken him all over the globe. So they had always made their plans after work to go back where they grew up. Everywhere else felt too temporary. Sheryl did a great job of making every place feel like home. They always tried to find the positives about every new location. But each time they set down some roots in their restlessness they are reminded that stop is not the ultimate destination. Nothing else ever really felt like home. So, as they wrapped up their last years of their careers, they started to put together a clearer picture of what that home should look like. It should incorporate all their favorite things they picked up on each stop along the way. But it should be unique. Different. Special. Their own place they could make home. And those dreams were what kept them going until it could become a reality.

God has a perfect home in store for his people. In Isaiah chapter 65 God describes it in terms we can relate to, using descriptions that have an impact on us now. He does it with the goal of transforming our lives right now. God gives hope for our earthly existence, the uncomfortable in between time. The time between Jesus’ first coming and his return. God wants his people to rest in his peace so we give priority to the things that will last, the relationships that really matter beyond the short time existence that takes up so much of our focus right now. And he does it by giving us a stunning picture of our real home. You and I and all believers will be at peace in our perfect home.

Present Focus

Black Friday has become a powerful force in our world. It used to signal the start of the Christmas shopping season on the day after Thanksgiving. But now it has spilled over into October. You can find early announcements of Black Friday deals, previews of promotions, and spectacular deals scattered throughout the fall. And they are very effective. Those deals that are available already now get our attention. We could be perfectly content with what we already have. But now that we are aware you could get a great deal on a 70 inch TV or a brand new Instant Pot or a new iPad, you won’t be satisfied until you have one. It’s so easy to see how life will be better almost instantly.

But Black Friday deals are just one savvy way retailers take advantage of a powerful assumption inside our hearts. We believe that having the hopes and desires of our hearts fulfilled will bring us happiness. Why do we think we need more stuff when we don’t have room for all the stuff we already have? Why do we need more clothes when are closets are overcrowded already? Will that new car really make life that much better to merit its dent in our budget? Why is debt and spending so hard to control? Why do I spend so much time jealous of the way someone looks, their hair, their fitness? Why do I crave their lifestyle? Why do I lust after what someone else could do for me? Would it really make me happy?

A nicer home might make things more comfortable for my family and a newer car might not leave me broken down on the highway. Nice clothes and good food make each day more enjoyable. None of them are evil or sinful in themselves. But they end up capturing our hearts. They betray a powerful lie we fall victim to over and over and over again. What I long for, what my heart aches for, that’s what I believe will give me the life I want. And if

happiness were the ultimate goal in life, all our pursuit and all our chasing after would still bring us short of God's goal. Perfection. Our hopes for the new and our desires for the improved cause us to lose sight of the much better and infinitely improved God has in store for us. God gets our attention with this promise: **"See, I will create new heavens and a new earth."** (Isaiah 65:17)

Ever since Adam and Eve slapped God in the face with their disobedience, this world suffers from the corruption of sin. This world is not perfect. No matter how hard we try or what we buy, we will never be able to make it into our perfect home. We aren't capable. We don't have the power. All our focus on all the temporary things of this life won't bring ultimate meaning or happiness. They just can't. To discover that, we need to see what God has planned.

Future Promises

God gives us his promises. Those promises might not look as shiny as that flyer coming in the mail or as bombastic as that car commercial on TV. God's promises are about what God is going to do rather than what we think we need. His promises give our lives a different focus. God has in store a complete restoration of perfection: **"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."** (Isaiah 65:18) Turn your attention away from trying to make things make you happy. You and I can't accomplish what only God is equipped to do. All our efforts will end up in dust at God's ultimate renovation.

God's perfect plans center on his people: **"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."** (Isaiah 65:19) So often Jerusalem and the people of Israel were a source of pain and vexation, angst and frustration for the Lord who had invested so much into their lives. God had ended up disappointed in their response to his relationship with them. Their disobedience and rejection wounded his heart. People under pressure and anxious of what was going on around them lost their focus on their Lord and his promises.

One reason we tend to focus on the new and improved is because of the baggage that comes with the old. The old things resurface in our minds at the worst times. Past mistakes and embarrassing choices. Hurts we caused and abuses we suffered. We want to move, move forward, but the damage from the past weighs us down. Focus on those painful memories causes us to lose hope and grow discouraged.

So God raises our sights with promises of a glorious restoration of creation. He uses guarantees like no premature deaths or lifespans that don't reach the century mark. No wasted efforts. No work that doesn't pay off. See, right now this created world is groaning. (Romans 8:22) It's not perfect. It's not going to gradually get better until every imperfection is eliminated. That's why God wants us to see what he will accomplish. The same God who created this world with its original perfection will restore it to the way it was supposed to be. Peace without pain or suffering. Joy without sadness. Delight without disappointment. Death is destroyed. Frustrations are banished. The most serious anxieties of life are alleviated. Fear and danger are eliminated. Conflict, danger and hostility give way to God's

certain security. The brokenness of this world isn't just patched up, it is replaced with something pristine and perfect.

Prepares Present with New Hopes

The times in between are the toughest. The time between buying the bargain and getting to use it can be almost unbearable. Right now we know what we have. But it doesn't compare with what our hearts desire. We know what we want, but it's far less than the future God promises. And those promises are meant to impact our hearts in the present. Those promises change our present reality once we realize everything that is our already through Jesus Christ.

Jim shocked everyone with his retirement speech. He had always been the hardest worker in the office, putting in the most time, demanding the same from everyone else. But as he said goodbye, he encouraged his former coworkers to spend less time at work and more time with family. Make your career less of your life's focus and develop some hobbies. Work with dedication at your job, but figure out what really matters in life. Find a passion that can get you through the small frustrations of every day life, and dedicate your life to what really matters once your current phase is over.

Future promises take away the limited, earthbound focus that so often dominates our hearts. Behind those desires is a subtle selfishness that thinks only of what makes me happy. God doesn't want any of his children to spend years in futility only to look back and realize what they could have had. God's promises of future perfection give hope for your current life right now. God's restoration transforms living in the present. The restoration God has in store for his people will blow away anything we could accomplish by our own efforts. What will last then is what really matters now. The promises of God are your better focus for the present. The promises of God recorded in Scripture are a more significant focus for right now. Promises need to be shared. People in your life need those promises to rescue them from the trap of what we think we need and want in this life. The people God places in your life will be impacted for eternity.

Sheryl can't stop talking about the remodeling project. They found the dream home for their retirement. But it's not yet what it will be. Current pictures of demolition stand side by side with the architect's rendering of the final product. She exudes more enthusiasm for what we ultimately take shape than for the milestones of her grandchildren.

This creation we live in now will meet its Redeemer. The only one who could rescue fallen humanity is the one who will return to restore all creation. Jesus met all the disappointments over the ineffective performances of God's flawed people. Jesus takes those imperfect lives and meets them with his flawless life. Jesus takes God's frustrations and pain over his people and gives joy in his perfection. The righteousness of Jesus makes God's people into a joy and delight.

The cross of Jesus takes on all the heartbreaks and disappointments of life. All the lives that are spent in frustration, all the efforts expended without results find their answer in the Son of God who became fully human for your rescue. All our toil that never brings the

happiness we are seeking find ultimate fulfillment in everything Jesus accomplished in his passion. All the grief over all the lives that ended too soon are answered in the sacrifice of Jesus in the prime of his life. All the sadness and tears over lives wasted are overcome by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Because Jesus came the first time to accomplish his mission to rescue humanity, you have a perfect home in the new heaven and new earth. You have a home free from fear and danger. You have a home where God will rejoice over what he has done for you. God's delight at the grace gifted to you will not wear out or break down. You have a permanent dwelling with perfect peace. Because of Jesus you will be at peace in your perfect home. Amen.