



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the Gospel today, Jesus invites us, again, to be all in for Him. He uses images of “treasure” and “a pearl of great price” to show that the Kingdom of Heaven is something desirable. As I mentioned recently, our image of Heaven is often... well... stunted. We think of Heaven as the images we see in cartoons – people with wings, sitting on clouds, playing harps. Not the most exciting image for our times. Yes, I would say that we all underestimate what Heaven really is.

Many times, we might desire Heaven because we definitely don’t want Hell and the pain and suffering there. Or we might desire it for some vague promise of happiness forever. Yet, we might begin to wonder about what will happen after the first 10,000 years: Will we begin to get bored? Will it all seem... ho hum?

And this is the complete wrong understanding of Heaven, for what makes Heaven “Heaven” is not where we are, but the Person with whom we are – Almighty God. This is the mystery of eternal life, not that it is like the Energizer Bunny – who keeps going and going and going – but that we are with the One who loves us totally and completely, with no selfishness, in carefree-timelessness. You know what it’s like to be in care-filled time-filledness. This is like when you’re planking – a minute seems an eternity! But with carefree-timelessness the hours fly by. Carefree-timelessness is that time we spend with those we most love, doing what we most enjoy doing, and there is no need or desire to look at the clock. In this world, carefree-timelessness comes to an end, but the mystery of Heaven is that it will never end! We will be in the presence of Love Himself, in total communion with Him. We will be freed from our petty selfishness so fully that we will be able to receive all of the love God desires to pour upon us. We will never get bored. We will never desire to be away from the One we love. We won’t keep clocks or calendars, for we won’t need to keep an eye on when our carefree-timelessness will come to an end.

All of this to say that there are no words to express how incredible Heaven is. Again, Jesus uses images to draw us in. While there are times that He shows the stark reality of Hell (as we see later in today’s Gospel: “The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth” [Matthew 13:49-50]), but the focus is to draw by love, not to frighten. To put it another way, God loves us so much, if fear is the only thing that will draw us to Him, He will use it –because He doesn’t want us to reject Him for all eternity – but He prefers to win us by love. He wants us to become fully alive, to become who we were meant to be, made in His image and likeness, and this is fulfilled when we fly to God in love, for He *is* love. If we go to Him for fear of bad consequences, or because we want something in our selfishness, He accepts that and works with that, but He desires so much *more* for us!

Jesus invites us, like the people who find the treasure and the pearl of great price, to be all in for Him, to hold nothing back. He shows us that it is worth it, for it means the fulfillment of who we are, the quenching of our deepest desires. As the famous poem “The Hound of Heaven” says, “All which I took from thee I did but take,/ Not for thy harms,/ But just that thou might’st seek it in My arms.” May we run to the Lord with open arms, surrendering *everything* so that we can receive *everything* in God.