

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

All Saints Sunday – November 3, 2024

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”

–1 John 3:1-3–

When we go as a family to visit the gravesites of our loved ones who have died, we talk about our memories of them, that we miss them, and read aloud the words from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Sometimes, when we depart, the conversation is filled with questions about what we will be like in heaven. Since Grandpa died at 83 years old, will he be the same age in heaven? Since Great-uncle Wayne died when he was a 4-year-old, will he be a kid in heaven? Inevitably we are caught asking questions and, even more problematic, giving responses about what we will be like according to the old way of thinking according to the law, not according to the gospel and life eternal beyond the law: what we will look like, what age will we be, what about our weight, will I get my missing body parts back, and will I still have all my warts and scars.

Scripture tells us some things about what we can look forward to in the resurrected life, even if there are details missing we wish were laid out. We hear the oft read scripture at funerals from the Apostle Paul and from Revelation: “What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:42-44), and “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new’” (Rev.21:3-5). The reality of the resurrected life defies our categories of law whether physics, biology, or math. Whether perishable, natural bodies, full of sin, crying, mourning and death, these things of ours under the old realm of the law have passed away. Eternal life is life not only one we shall finally see in the resurrection on the last day, but it is also life beyond the law and in Christ alone.

This also means that what 1 John 3:2 promises, “we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is,” is to be understood in categories beyond the law in Christ alone. To “be like him,” is not a category of morality or a righteousness according to the law. For Jesus Christ is not the law and definitely not my deed. In the life to come, we shall live and experience in our resurrected bodies life beyond the law in Christ who is the end of the law for righteousness. This is truly heaven and eternal freedom!

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