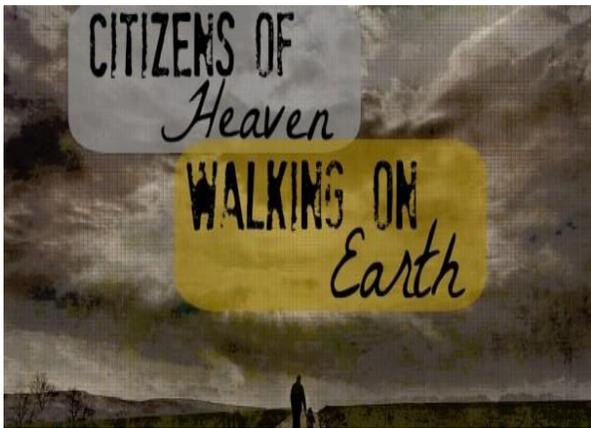


A New Residence: Living as a Citizen of Heaven

The Church. For many, these words bring to mind images of stained-glass windows, beautiful songs and liturgy, and a tradition far older than we can comprehend. For others, depictions of exuberant worship and passionate biblical teaching are the marks of a Sunday morning. In all of these things, **Jesus designed a culture far greater than any of us could have imagined. He brought a Kingdom, and as Christians, we are citizens of that Kingdom.**



The Apostle Paul in Philippians 3 describes those who follow Jesus as so much more than converts to a nice religion. “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ...” (Phil. 3:20). Paul calls Christians to live in a manner that is transformative from our prior lifestyle (Phil. 3:19). Paul similarly states in Colossians, “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (Col 3:1). Paul does not want us to focus solely on going to a church building on Sunday. He does not call us to make the worries of this life around the politics, positions, and practices of denominations. **He calls us to live radically, recognizing that the fundamental nature of our identity now rests solely in the hands of a King.** We have moved to a new residence, and we must live as citizens of our new home.



We all recognize what it means to a citizen of a city. My wife and I moved to Pennsylvania in 2019. I had lived in Missouri for 13 years prior. Missouri was where I went to high school, graduated from college, got married, pastored, and developed into the man I am today. My life was deeply tied to the city and my identity was very midwestern. However, when we moved to

the Northeast, our new city quickly changed our identity. As residents of a new place, the culture, laws, and lifestyle were now our own. In the last year, we have become marked as citizens of Scranton, PA. While there is still much to learn about our new home, we are recognized as citizens of PA.

In the same way, as the Church, not only do we receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, marking us as a temple of God’s presence and leading, we also take on an identity as Heaven’s citizens. The hope of the believer is knowing that this world is not our permanent home, and that one day (hopefully soon!), Jesus is coming back to take us home. Paul calls us to live as if we are in our new home, and **while we are still strangers and sojourners in a weary land, we can live purposely in the hope that our new residence is ahead of us** (1 Peter 2:11).

So, how do we live as citizens of Heaven? **We live victoriously and in unity.** The mark of the Church is living so intertwined with the victory of Jesus, that our character, desires, and interbeing are radically transformed by Him (Romans 12:1-2). Our motives towards others, ought to rest in a spirit of devotion and love for one another, raising and sharpening those whom we are united with in faith (Col 3:4-14). We are exhorted to use our spiritual gifts, serving alongside one another in joy (1 Cor. 12:1-11). As believers, our unity is so extensive, that when a fellow brother or sister rejoices, we sing with them. In the same way, when they mourn, we



hurt alongside them (1 Cor. 12:21-25). Finally, **in all things, we recognize Jesus as King, and the whole of our lives ought to be focused on serving and glorifying Him in everything we do as Kingdom people** (Col. 3:15-17).

- “Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
⁴Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
⁵Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness,
for they will be filled.
⁷Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
⁸Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
⁹Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3-10).



As Christians, we live in a paradox of knowing that while we have a home where we currently live, it is not our final residence. While we are not yet living in the glories of Heaven, we are to live and prepare for the eternal residence ahead of us. Living as Kingdom people not only sharpens us into the likeness of Jesus, it shows the world the truth and hope of His Kingdom. Live in the peace of Christ. Pursue the ways of Heaven. Through your transformed life, not only will you come to be more devoted to Christ, the world will see a culture unlike any other. This culture is built on truth, hope, and love, and is coming soon to change everything forever. **Know that this world is not your home. Live in the residence that is ahead of us. Live as a citizen of Heaven.**

