EYES ON THE SKIES!

1. Earthly perspective
2. Heavenly perspective

Perspective is important! Perspective is the view you have of your life. It is your particular way of assessing everything that involves you. Perspective is your grasp on the relative importance of the elements that make up your existence. Perspective is vital to a life that’s mature and fulfilling. It produces necessary balance in the way you live.

For example, every pregnant woman is uncomfortable, if not miserable, at one time or another during those 9 months. But that does not stop her from having that baby. She understands that the few months of inconvenience lead to a lifetime of joy with her child. She knows that a great blessing will come as a result of her pain. She has a good perspective.

The young often do not. When teenagers hold a summer or a part-time job, they often complain that their boss is unfair or unreasonable. They may want to quit. They have yet to develop the perspective that their crummy job is just a means to an end. It is a way to get the money they need for schooling so they can get a job that will be fulfilling. That is a good perspective.

So what is your perspective? How do you look at life, especially your life as a Christian? How do you establish the relative importance of the parts that comprise you and your time on earth? As a teacher of the Word, I try to help new Christians determine that perspective. Sometimes I do it mathematically, by the numbers!

I will ask them how long they expect to live. Whatever they say, I round it off to 100 years. Then I ask how long they imagine eternity to be. I know that it is endless, but for the sake of discussion I use the figure of 1 million years. So what is the relative value of life in this world compared to the life to come with the Lord? What is the proper perspective? The answer is 1 to 10,000!

The spiritual concerns in our lives are at least 10,000 times more important than our earthly concerns. Simple math illustrates that our perspective on life should be that God and our relationship to him is of supreme importance. Decisions about how to live now should be made in view of that life then. From that perspective, it should not be difficult to determine how we are to act and speak, what we should value during our few years in this world. But, of course, it is!

As true and convincing as perspective may be regarding decisions in life, those decisions are not easy to carry out. The thing about perspective is that we live in the now and not in the then which seems so far removed. All we really know or have any experience with is right here and right now. That is why it is hard to live a life of perspective - be it as human beings or as Christians.

Our sermon text for this morning offers us some assistance in establishing a proper perspective for our lives. Jesus’ eleven disciples had just witnessed Christ’s Ascension. They would have had every reason to be sad, but Luke tells us that they were filled with joy! Why? After three years with Jesus, they finally got it! They understood!

The Messiah was not an earthly deliverer from human oppression and tyranny. He was the divine Savior from death and hell. Jesus was that Messiah! Jes’ death on the cross was not a defeat, but the only way the souls of mankind could be redeemed from Satan to become the children of God.
Jesus’ resurrection was more than a personal victory. It was God’s way of publicly and forcefully declaring that Jesus’ sacrifice for sin has been accepted and new life is ours through faith in Jesus! Christ’s Ascension was not good-bye but a temporary and necessary separation. Jesus had things to prepare for his followers. They had a mission to carry out until he returned for them. But one day they would rise from the dead to live with him in heaven.

This produced a joy in the disciples that could not be restrained. They were changed men. They saw life from a different perspective. They had a new view of their existence in this world. All their priorities were rearranged - all their values were shaken up and reordered. As we continue to read the book of Acts, we see the results of that new perspective!

Up to this time, they considered themselves to be fishermen or govt employees or whatever. No more! They had become apostles, men sent out by the Lord himself to bear witness to Christ and declare his saving Gospel to the world. They were evangelists - good news carriers! Once they enjoyed a certain respect from their fellow Jews. They were not wealthy or influential by any means, but they were recognized and accepted as the faithful sons of God they were.

No more! Now they would be seen as followers of a man executed for blasphemy. Their attempts to preach Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s promises regarding the Messiah would be judged as heresy. They would be hunted and persecuted by those they once worshiped with.

At one time, finances were important to them. They had families to support, a business to maintain, there were things they wanted to buy and enjoy. No more! According to his promise in the Lord’s Prayer, the Father always provided daily bread for them and their families. But theirs was certainly not a life of abundance. They had just enough, and that was good enough for them.

So how did their perspective change so completely? Their eyes were on the skies! They had seen their Lord, Jesus Christ, ascend into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. They knew that through faith in Jesus as their Redeemer, they, too, would ascend into heaven to enjoy perfect bliss in the unobscured presence of God and his love.

They had full possession of the most important thing in life. Something glorious beyond words belonged to them and it could never be taken away. They had what was 10,000 times more valuable, so to speak, than anything else, and suddenly everything important in the 1 lost its value. They were now free from the concerns of this life - at least they could see them from the perspective of the blessedness to follow.

They would be able to enjoy the good things in life - as the Lord provided them - knowing that something better was to come. And now, they saw that the years they had left could serve a better purpose than just satisfying themselves. They saw that they were given the power to affect and change the perspective of other sinners! They could bring eternal life to one and all, just as Jesus told them to do!

The Holy Spirit would use their time, their efforts, their money to rescue souls bound for hell. He would work through their use of the Gospel. This became their greatest joy. They found their delight and their purpose in life in the words of the angels: Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.

The angels’ words are certainly intended for us. Why do we stand idly by? As
pleasurable as it may be to reflect upon what Jesus has done for us and what lies in our future, it is wasted time if that is all we do while he is gone. We have seen Jesus taken up to heaven. We have the incomparable joy that comes from knowing he will come back in the same way to take us to our place with him in heaven.

We live in eager anticipation of his return. Our perspective has changed! And it is this new perspective which turns our eyes to the world in which we live. We see the hundreds, the thousands, the millions who exist without the joy of knowing Jesus as their Savior. We realize that we have something that can change their perspectives!

So we continue on in our jobs, but we understand that our true calling is as an evangelist - a Gospel carrier to the world. We prepare ourselves with prayer and study of God's Word so we may serve as faithful and true evangelists. We approach every situation in life with an eye looking for some way to share the good news. We seize opportunities to witness with a boldness that can only come from the Holy Spirit.

We want approval from the people around us, but it is more important for us to approved by God. You know, as the Bible tells you, the Gospel is foolishness to unbels and so you will suffer as an evangelist. But you also have the Lord's assurance that the Spirit chooses to work through the means of grace - his Gospel in the Word which you convey. As an evangelist, you will certainly be a fool for Christ.

We are prone to think that our money is a blessing from the Lord which we may use as we see fit. It is that. But in truth, it is also the financial means by which evangelists like you send other evangelists to people beyond your reach. How much of what we have should be used that way? God has set no limits on how much good news we can share!

To be sure, these are all dramatic changes in our lives, but they are necessary. They are made necessary by the new perspective the love of God brings us. What is most valuable in life is eternal life. What is most important in life is living for your Savior. And what is most important to him is the salvation of all mankind. Keep your eyes on the skies and the perspective will bring you joy now and forever. Amen.

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