



Old School Can Still be Cool
“1996 – One Sweet Day”

(Biblical Text: Revelation 21:1-5)

Dr. Michael F. Gardner, Senior Pastor
Old Mission Church, Fairway, Kansas

I've had fun with this series, called “Old School,” visiting some spiritual messages hidden in number one hits from several decades. I hope you have too - but hey, if it wasn't your thing, **today's the last message in the series!**

The last song is **“One Sweet Day.”** Let me say up front that Mariah Carey and Boyz II Men are really not my thing. But here's the deal. Their song was number one on Billboard for 16 consecutive weeks in 1996, the most consecutive weeks ever in Billboard's history. So there's something there, and their voices are simply amazing. *(Let's hear a clip...)*

According to Carey and Boyz II Men the song is about those they lost in their lives, some of whom died of AIDS. It also was used at the funeral of Princess Diana in 1997. But the words speak for everyone who has lost a loved one...

“Sorry, I've never told you, all I wanted to say...”

“I know eventually we'll be together, one sweet day...”

There's a lot of interest right now in the concept of heaven, like the movie **“God's not Dead”** and the best selling book and movie, **“Heaven is for Real.”**

Mariah Carey and Boyz II Men are not the only ones singing about heaven... We've been doing that in Church forever, but not just in Church.

The Righteous Brothers sang, *“If you believe in forever, then life is just a one night stand. If there's a rock and roll heaven, then you know they've got a ...”*

Led Zeppelin's **Stairway to Heaven** reminded my generation that however we try, we can't buy a stairway to heaven.

Or if your taste runs more to County there was Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers and their unforgettable lyrics from “The Midnight Choir:”

“Will there be Mogen David in Heaven, sweet Jesus? (Some of you know what comes next, help me out...) If there ain't, who the hell wants to go?”

But the issue of and our questions about heaven are not all smiles and songs.

Pastor Karen asked me this week how to talk about heaven to our children.

(8:30 and 11, add...) She did a great job. Give her some love!

One of the hardest things every parent has to do is explain the concept of heaven to their little children. And it is often about a grandparent. It's hard because it's hard to come to terms with what we believe ourselves. It is.

My favorite bluesman, Eric Clapton, a few years ago, touched the heart of everyone after the death of his four-year-old son, when he sang, *"Would you know my name, would you feel the same, if I saw you in heaven?"*

And Clapton's conclusion was the same as that of our text this morning. **There are no tears in heaven.** And I believe that too.

Revelation 21:4-5 says this about the Kingdom of Heaven, *"God will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and death shall be no more. And there shall be no mourning or crying or pain, for the former things will have passed away."*¹

And I believe there are no tears in heaven. But there are definitely tears on earth. Even for the strongest of us. It's hard to lose those we love. It is.

Back when I was a teenager, going to heaven was an abstract thought or issue to be discussed in the future. It's not so abstract anymore. One of my older friends says it this way, *"Every day is one day closer to the exit ramp!"*

And I know that I'm not the only one here to deal with losing a parent, or a spouse or a child. When my mother and Ann's mother died a few years ago, I was surprised that grief hit me so hard. I guess I thought since I'm a pastor and have led hundreds of funerals, it would be easier. **But it wasn't.**

And I still remember the first time someone my age, from my friends, died. It was so hard. Sort of puts you in touch with a lot of things, like *"Do I believe there is an afterlife?"* Or *"What really happens when we die?"* Or *"What is heaven really like?"* So I had an idea for the message today.

What if I asked you for your questions? (And I tried to answer them.) Risky? Yes, I know. Stupid? Maybe. But that's what we are going to do today.

You get to write the conclusion! As many as I can answer in 5-6 minutes! You can text them to me at 913-953-6332. Or write them on a slip of paper. Our other pastors will pick them up. (*I'll put all my answers on the webpage.*)

Let's start with a few from this week that have been messaged / texted in. (I'll use some of the following as needed, but focus on the questions)

¹ Revelation 21:4-5 paraphrased from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible by the author

What does heaven look like? Look around and behold the work of the Lord. How can anything be less than this? *“Eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9)*

Is there place for me? Yes. Tailor made for each one of us. Jesus says in John 14:3 he goes to *“prepare a place for you.”* and *“In my father’s house there are many rooms.”* My hope is that the kids are not moving back home.

Will there be marriage? Jesus said, *“No marriage, or giving in marriage.” (Matthew 22:30)* I hope to spend eternity with Ann. I haven’t asked her.

Will I see loved ones? I think so. The Scripture says there is relationship. We have the capacity to *“know fully as we are fully known.” (1 Corinthians 13)*

Will we become angels? No. Matthew 22:30 says, *“we will be like angels.”*

What will we look like? Ourselves, only better! Free of limitations, illness. *1 Corinthians 15* says *“...what is perishable will give way to the imperishable.”*

Who will be there? Well, Jesus for sure. In heaven we will be *“...away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:6-8.)*

Who will make it in and who won’t? Not ours to say. *John 3:16.* God sent Jesus so we could know. In John 14:6, Jesus said, *“I am the way.”* But In John 10:16, he also said, *“Other sheep have I that are not of this fold.”*

Will there be animals? (one of our kids) *Isaiah 65* says there will be lions, lambs, wolves, and foxes, so I don’t see why there couldn’t be dogs and cats.

Do good works earn our way? They don’t hurt. But NO! It’s only by grace. *“For by grace you have been saved, not by works not by yourselves.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

Can people in heaven see us? Yes. I think so. Hebrews 12:1 says, *“we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.”* Sometimes I feel that presence.

Have I read Heaven is for Real? Yes. **Do I believe it was for real?** I believe it was real for three-year-old Colton Burpo, and for his parents. **Is it possible?** Yes. His was not the first NDE. **Was it just a dream?** Maybe. **Does it make my belief stronger?** No. I already had a strong belief in something beyond.

You seem rational, do you really believe? Yes. **Is there proof of heaven?** Scientific proof? I don’t have any. But... Have you seen goodness? Beauty? Experienced grace and kindness? Been loved, really loved? Then you’ve seen heaven. Just a foretaste... **I think it will blow our minds. (Let us pray.)**