

From the Corner

Heaven on Our Minds: A Whole Lot of Living to Do

Larry Baird

I once heard a colleague say “heaven is looking better all the time.” He said it while reflecting on the death of a parishioner who had meant a great deal to him. On one hand I understood completely his observation. The older one becomes, the more friends and family die. Consequently heavenly thoughts are more populated and personal. On the other hand I can honestly say that I am in no rush. That is probably because my life is full and for whatever reason has within it very little trauma. So, yes, heaven is “looking better all the time”, but I still have a lot of living to do right here, right now. I’ll leave the heavenly rewards stuff in God’s hands where it belongs.

I believe, as pastors are prone to say, “This will preach.” If I were proclaiming the word this Easter I think I would make the observation that we need to understand who is responsible for what. God is clearly willing to be responsible for heaven. This is good because it is nothing you and I can pull off. We can gain it only through faith. No amount of works will bring about heaven.

On the other hand, I believe it is pretty clear that God desires us to be responsible for this side of things. In the here and now we are to be the Church in such a way that more people can get a glimpse of heaven. I have been around long enough to know that this will keep us busy. There are plenty of people here and worldwide whose quality of life and personal experience gives them insufficient evidence to be profoundly hopeful tomorrow, let alone forever. So I believe this is our work. We are to work and live here and now so that the maximum number of people will have the experience of being profoundly hopeful. We can do that by attempting to alleviate the “hell” in their lives and proclaiming what Christ has done for all of us in His life, death, and resurrection. Sometimes this means giving a cup of cold water; helping them out when disaster strikes; working for justice; or just being a friend when they cannot find one. It always entails sharing the gospel.

It is Easter and we have a whole lot of living to do, today and forever.