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June 27th, 2021

Sermon Text: Proverbs 30:4-5

WHERE HEAVEN AND EARTH MEET

Our Father in heaven. In heaven. Has it ever struck you what we're confessing with those words? You, Father, are in heaven. You are not from here.

We are here. We are not where you are. We are neither in heaven nor from heaven. Dear Father, there is such a vast chasm that separates us from you. Heaven is an altogether different universe, a mode of existence entirely outside of this world and life. We cannot begin to reach out to you or find you or climb up to you or transport ourselves into your world. You are the Father who is in heaven. We are here on earth. How can we ever hope to connect with you?

How stark our separation from heaven becomes if we consider the substance of heaven, the stuff that heaven is made up of! People imagine that heaven is where you get your wings and a halo and recline on a fluffy cloud and no one ever bothers you anymore. That's a narcissistic view of heaven. But that's not the substance of God's Kingdom. In his letter to the Galatians, the apostle Paul spells out the recipe, he lists the ingredients that make up the place where God lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Yet those things are so far from what you and I are like. Is peace the prevailing mood in your heart? Or is it anxiety? Resentment? Short temper? Craving ambition? Disdain? Does patience describe your attitude toward your parents or when you're driving a car? Is kindness truly your way or

only so long as no one is annoying you? It's kind of hard being kind to someone who really doesn't appreciate it, isn't it? Or to someone who disagrees with you about Covid. Are you all about goodness? You want God to look at you and say, "Oh you have a good heart!" But how much energy or thought do you actually expending contemplating what is good, what is holy, what is godly? Is gentleness the hallmark of everything you say to your wife? Does self-control describe you when you're on the internet, or when you're disciplining your kids, when you open a bottle of wine or when coworkers are dishing about other coworkers?

Notice, you and I are not made up of the stuff heaven is made of. We don't even come close. Heaven so far from us.

That creates a dilemma. Because this world, this life -despite all the blessings we enjoy -this life is seriously troubled. It is filled with horrifying, humiliating, painful anguishing things that we cannot escape. Then it ends in death. Perhaps you have been around a dead body. There is nothing nice or pretty about death. And if we can't reach heaven, what awaits us after death? Jesus says what awaits us is the absolute loneliness, the pitch darkness, the unholy terror of hell.

So we cry out, "Our Father in heaven!" How can we reach Him to safety? If only there were some place where heaven and earth meet! This is the question in Proverbs chapter 30: *Who has gone up to heaven and come down?* What if someone did? "Who has gone up to heaven and come down?" What if, instead of us reaching up to Him, someone who already belonged to heaven came down to us? Listen to the words of Someone who did: *No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father.* Another time that same Someone said, *No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven.* Again, this Someone declared: *If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.*

But is this Someone from heaven a person who can really do anything? Is He someone who can really help? Proverbs 30 throws down these questions: *Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands? Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name and the name of his son? Tell me if you know!* Hmm. Didn't we hear about Someone in the Gospel Lesson today who spoke two words and reduced the howling wind to a gentle whisper and the raging waves to a glassy surface? Here is Someone who clearly has command over this earth and must stand outside it and above it and governs the very laws of nature.

You know His name. It is Jesus, the Son of our Father in heaven. Jesus is where heaven and earth meet.

But wait... dissipating a few storm clouds is one thing. That doesn't really help us who are still separated from heaven, does it? Heaven is the home of righteousness. That still leaves us sinners cold and shivering out on the doorstep.

The one who gathers the wind in the hollow of His hands and wraps up the waters in His cloak came for the express purpose of bridging the gap between heaven and earth and bringing us to our Father in heaven.

He who is greater than mother nature is also more powerful than all the sin and death in this world. When Jesus hung on the cross He became your sin. He suffered your hell. He died your death. And since He is larger than this entire universe, He swallowed them all up so that your sin, your death and your hell are eliminated, vacuumed away.

But that's not all of it. While He walked here on earth, this Jesus who is the substance of heaven itself was all about love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. He lived these qualities

to perfection. He lived them mightily. He lived them in human flesh. So He did this not for Himself. He did it for us.

He now awards us everything that He is. The one who comes down from heaven bridges the gap between heaven and earth here in the Lord's Supper. People mistakenly think that Jesus came to show us a way. He did not come to show us a way. He came to give.

In the Sacrament, Jesus gives us Himself, body and blood in the bread and wine. And if He gives Himself to us in this Sacrament then He also gives us everything that He is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. He awards us these things. They belong to us because Christ belongs to us. The result is that our status before God is that we are dressed and ready for heaven. Indeed we belong to heaven even now. In this way you might say he even transports us into heaven by this Sacrament.

What's more, the power of this Sacrament is such that God the Holy Spirit will enable you to begin living like a citizen of heaven even now. Granted we are still weak and feeble in our sinful human flesh, but the Spirit enables us to make a beginning at love, joy, peace, patience, and so on. He prepares us to live in heaven by giving birth to those qualities in us right now through faith in Jesus. For Jesus is where heaven and earth meet. Therefore heaven is never far away from you.

Proverbs 30 adds this: *Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.* If every word of God is flawless, then there is no reason for us to doubt what Jesus says about the Sacrament: This is my body; this is my blood; eat and drink for the forgiveness of your sins. If this is true that Jesus gives us the forgiveness of sins in this Sacrament, then heaven is truly opened up to us in this Sacrament. For wherever God's word is, there Jesus is, and there heaven and earth meet.

Therefore you see, it's not a matter of you reaching up to God or trying to access your way into heaven. God comes to you. God brings Jesus to you - with words and in Sacrament. Where you have Word and Sacrament you have Jesus. And where Jesus is, heaven and earth meet.

Jesus once said, *If you remain in me and my words remain in you ask whatever you wish and it will be given you.* What greater thing could we ask for, according to His words, than to be carried across that gap between earth and heaven and brought to our Father? What greater thing could we ask for, according to His Word, than that we be able to live like people who belong to heaven who practice peace and faithfulness and self-control? If He promises to grant us these things, will He deny us anything that's in keeping with His Word? He was even willing to change the weather instantly for some frightened believers in a boat.