

The world, Christians, is always looking for utopia. It is looking for a heaven on earth, a time when all of its troubles will be gone, when all of its problems will be taken away. And our day and age, Christians, tends to put this in the future, a coming time when everything will be solved. And it's just within our grasp, if we just reach out and take it.

There's lots of different ways that this happens, Christians. Some try to find utopia through politics, especially communists and Marxists. They say that the coming revolution is going to sweep everything away. And it will create a new society, one which will have no more oppression, one which will have no more inequality! And this coming revolution will take away all of the problems that have come before, and we will have heaven on earth.

Some try to find it through technology. If we just advance far enough, we say, then we will solve all of our problems. Then we will take care of all of these issues. You see this especially in television and in books, especially science fiction, where some super advanced society is depicted as having defeated crime, as having done away with war, as having taken care of disease and hunger and poverty and all of these things. It's all gone, they say, because they have advanced technologically so far. That's how we're going to solve all of these issues. That's how we're going to find heaven on earth!

But I think most try to find it through progress. This idea that, generally speaking, things are just getting better and better as we go along. The past was worse than right now, and the further back you go in the past, the worse and worse it gets. But the future, we think, the future is going to solve all of our problems! That's why you hear expressions like "stuck in the past" or "turning back the clock" or "trying to turn back time" as ways of describing something bad. Something bad tries to go backwards. It tries to go back in time, and that's not what we want to do. Something which is "ahead of its time," something which is "of the future," "innovative," is always considered good. Because that's where we're going to find something better, they say. We will find it in the future when we finally have a heaven on earth.

And there's other ways that this happens too, Christians. These aren't all of them by any means. But they're all basically the same. Looking forward to something which is to come. Looking forward to something better in the future. That's how we'll deal with all the problems of the world.

And the reason why the world does this, Christians, is really not that hard to understand. Look around you. The world is evil. The world is broken. The world is full of all kinds of problems. Just go home, turn on the TV, and turn on the news. You're going to hear stories of crimes, stories of wars, stories of division within our nation, stories of sins which make us blush, all kinds of evil things. Problems which cry out, wanting to be fixed. Surely there must be something better, the world says! Surely there must be a way out of these problems.

We as Christians share that feeling too, don't we? We know that the world is broken, that the world has been ruined by sin. Paul says in Romans chapter 8: "The creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption, and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of

God." The creation itself is bound to corruption, is bound to sin. It is broken. It wants to be set free. We want to find something better!

But we as Christians suffer something far more than the world. Because like the world, we want to see something better. We want to see a way out of these problems. But we also suffer the hatred of the world. The problem is, Christians, that God shows the world just how empty their dreams really are. God shows them that there is no such thing as utopia. There is no such thing as a manmade heaven on earth. These things have happened because of who we are by nature. We are sinners, sinners who stand guilty before the Lord. Our sins have created this mess. Our sins have created this hell on earth. And God shows us that nothing we do and nothing that we make is ever going to change that fact. We are, in fact, always the same. Never getting any better, if we're talking just about the world.

And the world hates to hear that. The world doesn't want to hear about its sin. And so it hates God, and it hates those who belong to him as well. This is why communists, old and new, work to destroy society. They want to tear it all down. This is why the Soviets in the previous century tried to stamp out the Church in Russia. And it's why the riots and all the intentional problems which we see around us today are meant to destroy and to tear down. Because they want to bring it down so that they can build back something else in its place. Tear it all down, they say, and then we will have heaven on earth! This is why those who believe in technology always depict a future without God. Every time you see it in movies or in books, some super advanced society is never shown to be Christian. Because all of this stuff, they say, is holding us back. We need to get rid of it. Get rid of God, get rid of the Church. Then we will find heaven on earth! It's also why this belief in things getting generally better, a belief in progress always sees the Church as something out of date, as something which should be left behind, because it's holding us back. The world hates the Church, Christians, just as much as it hates God for speaking the truth. And for that reason, it works very hard to make our lives miserable.

So if there is no utopia then, if there is no manmade heaven on earth, where is our hope? Are we doomed to just always be stuck in this? To never see anything better? No. We have hope, Christians. We have hope, because it is not a manmade heaven on earth that we look forward to, but rather a new heavens and a new earth. The Lord has promised us something far greater than the things which we see right now. The world and its empty dreams will come to nothing, but God will give to his people something beyond their imaginations. As he says in Isaiah 65, starting in verse 13, the Lord says to the world: "Behold, my servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry. Behold, my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty. Behold, my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be put to shame. Behold, my servants shall sing for gladness of heart, but you shall cry out for pain of heart, and shall wail for breaking of spirit." The world who attacks the Church, Christians, will be judged on that great and glorious Day when the Lord comes, on the Day when Jesus Christ returns to judge the living and the dead.

And what God has prepared for you is far beyond our wildest imaginations. Because how could we possibly understand a world totally different from our own? A world with no sin, a world with no evil, a world with no brokenness? It's so far beyond our comprehension that we can't even begin to imagine what that would be like. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 2: "What

no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him," this is what God has promised to us.

But God gives us a picture, Christians, a picture in our Old Testament reading from Isaiah 65, a picture we can understand. A picture of a joy that never comes to an end. The Lord promises to his people a world where sin and suffering will be forgotten. The Lord promises to his people a world where they will rejoice in God, and he will rejoice in them. The Lord promises to them a world where a man a hundred years old will be like a man in his twenties. The Lord promises to them a world where nothing ever fails, and hard work always has its reward. The Lord promises to them a world where they will see their children and their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren and on and on for generations upon generations to come. The Lord promises to them a world where even the creation itself will be at peace. A world where the wolf and the lamb shall graze together. A world where the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The Lord promises to them a world where the enemy will be defeated forever, where dust shall be the serpent's food. And they shall know peace that will never come to an end. That day will surely come, Christians, just as God has promised.

And this hope is yours in Jesus Christ. Because it is Jesus who has prepared a place for you in the heavenly mansions. It is Jesus who has given you the Holy Spirit to make you worthy of the kingdom. It is Jesus who has written your name in his book of life with his own blood. And it is Jesus who, when he returns, will make all things new. God has promised you this, Christians, through Jesus Christ, so that our hope is in him and not in the world.

So Christians, don't look for utopia in the world. Worldly hopes, worldly dreams, worldly promises, a manmade heaven on earth--all of that will fail. It will come to nothing. Rather, look to the Lord who has promised you something greater, the Lord who is coming soon. Let us face all the evils around us as Christians, not in fear and despair, but in godliness and in holiness, as 2 Peter 3 tells us: "According to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." This is what God has prepared for you, Christians, and it will be glorious. Because as our Lord Jesus says in Revelation 22: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen! Come, Lord Jesus," and come quickly! Amen.

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, you have prepared for us something far beyond our imaginations in your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us always to look forward to him who is to come when he will return to judge the living and the dead. In his name we pray. Amen.