



CENTRAL SHELBY CHURCH OF CHRIST
working and worshipping together to serve the Lord



*"Jesus answered and said to her,
'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst
again, but whoever drinks of the water that I
shall give him will become in him a fountain of
of water springing up into everlasting life.'" (John 4:13, 14)*

HOW DESPERATELY DO WE WANT TO GO?

While I was preoccupied with some information-hunting the other night, my wife Tara watched a PBS television special on the history of Ellis Island. She later related some interesting facts and stories to me.

Between 1880 and 1920 about twenty-four million people came through this immigration hub. (That's a lot of people, folks!) Most of them were Europeans, excited about coming to a land of freedom and almost limitless opportunity.

It was at this facility that immigrants were documented, received medical checkups and treatment, had their backgrounds checked, etc. Some of those who came to Ellis Island with serious health conditions were refused legal status and, with disappointment, had with to sail back to their country of origin.

One moving story that Tara related to me was of a European husband and wife and their three children. They were all healthy except for the youngest daughter, who had developed on the voyage to America a case of trachoma (a serious condition that attacks the tissue surrounding the eyes). Because of her condition, she was not permitted to enter the country. Her family members, however, could stay if they so wished. Of course, they did not consider such to be an option. But what the documentary related next was deeply moving. For hours and hours -- between the time they learned that they could not enter the United States and the time of their voyage back across the Atlantic -- the father and his family could be heard in their room vehemently wailing and weeping. They were devastated at the thought of not being allowed to enter this wonderful country.

Understandably, the story made me think about my own level of appreciation for this country.

More so, however, the story made me consider my own level of appreciation for heaven. (I am not comparing heaven to the United States. I'm merely illustrating a point.) This family, and millions of others, were excited at the thought of coming to this land. How excited am I at the thought of going to heaven?

Am I excited? Are you? Are our daily lives guided by a desire to go to heaven? Or have we become so enamored with this (comparatively) decrepit world in which we live, that "new heavens and a new earth" mean nothing to us? (2 Peter 3:13) News flash: if we don't have much of a longing for heaven, we're undoubtedly not headed there.

Heaven is a real place, beloved. It's a place of happiness -- no sadness whatsoever. There won't be any disease or disaster or death -- only joy, as we serve and worship the Lord. It's a place of beauty, a place of righteousness, a place of rest. And it's forever -- eternal! (Revelation 21 and 22).

DO WE WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN? Or could it be the desire that European family had for this earthly country eclipses ours for the heavenly? HOW BADLY DO WE WANT TO GO?

I just wonder, sometimes.

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is... Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4).

"These all died in faith... and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth... They seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country..." (Hebrews 11:13-16).

--Mike Noble