

Himmlische Gesinnung (With German Translation)

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being heavenly-minded and seeing the world from a heavenly perspective, highlighting the transforming power of heaven and the confrontation between heaven and earth.

Duration: 56:45

Scripture: Genesis 28:12, John 1:51, John 3:6-8, John 3:31, Colossians 3:2

Topics: "German"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of setting our affections on heavenly things rather than earthly distractions. He shares a personal anecdote about wishing he had students who sought answers from above rather than giving predictable earthly answers. The speaker encourages the audience to shut off earthly distractions like the radio and TV and seek that which is above. He also discusses the potential impact of seeking heavenly things and warns that speaking the truth may create a crisis, but it is not our responsibility to solve it.

Transcript

Good morning again, children. As I threatened last night, I'm going to speak on heaven this morning. And what could be more irrelevant to the practical German mind? And yet, what is more desperately urgent for the German nation? And my own nation, which is more German than it knows.

But heaven, more heaven. Everything in the world, the flesh and the devil, conspires against it. If it's only a casual category for you, that is only doctrinally correct, you'll never have it.

You'll know you have it when you experience the transforming power of it. You'll be in the world but not of it. And strangely immune from the powers of the world.

Because you'll see the things that are invisible and eternal. The things that shall shortly become permanent and enduring. While the things that are temporal and seen will pass away.

This is central to the whole apostolic perception of the faith. This is apostolic seeing itself. Everything is radically altered when it is seen in the light of heaven.

And the world wants to persuade you that if you become heavenly minded, you'll be no earthly good. And you've been too quick to agree. When actually it's the opposite that's true.

Except you're heavenly minded, you're no earthly good. Was there anyone more heavenly minded than Paul? He saw the eternal weight of glory that made his present sufferings both momentary and light. And this is exactly the point, children.

You do not have a grasp of heaven until it profoundly affects your present. It made his present sufferings both momentary and light. And his apostolic sufferings were enormous.

Five times have I been suffered strokes of thirty-nine, forty less one. Many times beaten with rods. Stoned and left for dead.

And in shipwreck and in the seas all night. In fastings and persecutions. In fear of my own brethren and flight for my life.

And yet all of these sufferings were both momentary and light. Because he did not fasten his eyes on the things that are temporal and seen, but on the things which are invisible and eternal. And they affected his present.

This is exactly what makes us strangers and pilgrims and sojourners in the earth. This is why, when the communist authorities prevailed in Russia, the believers were put in mental institutions and given shock treatments and straitjackets. This is irrational.

This is insanity in self. To say that there is a valid invisible realm of heaven that counts. And it counts in a way that affects the believer presently.

That will make you strange. And a pilgrim and a sojourner in the earth. Which should all along have been our description anyway.

But if it's to be that for you, you'll have to contend for it. Contend for the faith that was once and for all given the saints. It's more than the issue of its doctrines.

It's more than just a statement of dogmas. But here is the heavenly quality of life at stake. You have to contend for that.

Because everything conspires against it. And I can't imagine any other nation where this is more the case than here in Germany. I feel like a poor cousin.

In America, we don't all have this civilization like you. Or the colors of joy that you experience during the day. These rich earthly seductions.

As far as food, pleasure and earthly lusts are concerned. How should heaven be real for you? Unless you confess that you're a stranger in the earth. That you choose to be a stranger and a sojourner.

For for them, God is not ashamed to say that he is their God. And he has prepared a city for them. A heavenly city.

One that they cannot wait to enter. And their present living is in anticipation of that. Does that make one impractical and irrelevant now? Im Gegenteil.

On the contrary. I just remembered that from German. It's a paradox.

But the more that we lay hold of heaven, the more profoundly relevant we become on earth. Who is a greater example of this than Paul himself? What practical question did he not consider? The discipline of the church with erring brothers. How we should even take communion.

He was continually involved in the daily life of the church and all of its practicalities. But he could give answer because he was the man from heaven. He said, I have my citizenship in heaven.

While he was yet on the earth. Heaven is reality, children. It's truth itself.

It's the headquarters of all that is real. And that's why if we are to be a gate to heaven and the earth for Jews that will come, we need to be rooted in the earth, but a ladder that ascends to heaven. But if it's only for you a phrase, a category, something that we can wait for until we die, we will not be that gate.

I spoke for three weeks on the subject of heavenly reward to our own little family in northern Minnesota. It was unbelievably difficult. I had never had such difficulty.

It was like speaking to a concrete wall. The word kept bouncing off. I had never seen such a resistance to a theme ever.

That's the resistance to heaven that is to be found in the earth. Even in our own flesh. The world is too much with us.

Therefore the scripture says, set your affections on the things which are above. And not below. That's an act of will.

That's a deliberate choosing. Because if you are not conscious of this and willfully and consciously make this your choice, then the whole weight of worldly, fleshly things will assuredly keep us below. So having said all that as an introduction, I want to direct you to a confrontation that is eternally classic.

The man of earth versus the man of heaven. Nicodemus and Jesus. In John chapter 3. And don't look upon this as mere history.

This is you that is being described. This is a confrontation that is coming to you. God is going to send his Jacob-Nicodemus people into the midst of you.

For who is the best expression of the earth in its worldly wisdom and erudition and philosophy and understanding but us Jews? We have given the world earthly alternatives to the things which are heavenly. For example Marxism. Freudianism.

And every ism that has its origin out of Jewish genius. We are eminently the men of the earth. Even in our Judaism.

It is still an ism. And we are going to confront that earthly man. Everything points to it.

This is the historic conclusion of the age. And Nicodemus is the ultimate expression of it. The best.

Religious. Ethical. Moral.

A ruler of the Jews. And with a sufficient integrity to discern that there is something about this Jesus that needs to be examined. What a classic collision.

And he asks some good earthly questions. You are a teacher that has come from God for no man can do these miracles that you do except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except the man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.

What kind of answer is that? It's a heavenly answer to an earthly question. It bears no relationship to what was asked. One man is speaking from the platform of the earth.

Another one is answering from heaven. What kind of answer would you give? God has a plan for your life. Step one, step two, step three, step four.

The gospel as the nomenclature on how to be saved. The technical formula for salvation. I can tell you right now.

You'll lose every Nicodemus that God sends to you. They don't need earthly answers. They need a heavenly answer.

And one that can only come down from above in that moment. To those who can trust for it. And will not rely on their methodologies.

German all too German. God is calling you to the heavenly sphere. And all eternity is at stake.

For the Nicodemuses will pass through us completely unimpressed. For we will have answered them exactly as they thought we would. The answer of Jesus is bewildering.

It does not seem to make sense. And as he goes on it gets worse. The poor Nicodemus becomes absolutely rattled.

Must the man go through a second time through his mother's womb? And Jesus does not explain. He does not seek to alleviate him from the crisis that his word brings. For he says the spirit lists where it will and you cannot know.

From whence it came know where it's going. I'm preaching that way this morning. I don't know where it's coming from.

I don't know where it's going. I don't know the next sentence. The next scripture.

All I know is the theme. Heaven. And I'm required to wait on God for the next statement.

It may not appear so to you. It may seem flawlessly fluent. But I'm as much dependent upon heaven this morning as Jesus himself was in that conversation that night with Nicodemus.

He could not know which way the spirit was going. He could only obey. And so I also.

And you also. But Art, this is a total antithesis of all in which I have been instructed and brought up in German culture and education. This is death for your German mentality.

But it's life for Nicodemus. Maybe not on the spot. Maybe he goes home rattled and confused.

Maybe he agonizes on his bed through the night hours. What was this man saying? What does it mean? But I have perfect confidence I'll meet him in heaven. Because he heard from heaven.

From a son of heaven. Even while he was on the earth. Look at verse 12 and 13.

If I've told you earthly things and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man which is in heaven. But what a confusing statement. The son of man is standing right there in Jerusalem with Nicodemus.

In the earth. But he says the son of man which is in heaven. At the very same moment that he's on the earth.

And if you don't understand that. And I know you don't. You're living outside the faith.

You've not yet come in to the apostolic place. You're still the victim of categories. Secular and sacred.

Religious things. You're not in heaven while you're on earth. You cannot believe for that.

Therefore you cannot receive for that. Therefore you cannot express that. This is the faith.

This is the gate to heaven. And if we don't find it. And consistently maintain it.

We will lose the earthly Nicodemuses whom God sends into our midst. No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man which is in heaven. It's the statement of Jesus.

But also of every son of God who is in him. Who sets his affections on the things which are above. Whose citizenship is in heaven.

Even while he's in the earth. And going to work tomorrow morning. In the office, the factory and the school.

He comes to those places as the man from heaven. With not some kind of phony effete spirituality that walks on eggshells. Any more than Jesus was.

He's true man. Full man. Not some affected spirituality that is ethereal.

But you can't be that except you're heavenly. Heavenly-ness is what makes that man. A man.

What's the application for preachers and pastors? To trust heaven. And the spirit that lists where it will. And you cannot know.

I've got to know. What will be the result of this? How will the people be affected? What do we do in practical respect? You cannot know. What you're still required to trust.

And you're going to find yourself speaking bewildering words. That leave people confused. And you can't send them home happy at the end of the same service.

They may not be happy for several days. Because your strange word has precipitated a crisis. And though your mouth was responsible for creating it, it's not responsible for solving it.

The great American evangelist Phinney was such a heavenly man. He didn't send them home happy. He sent them home trembling.

Who were clutching the pillars of the building lest they fall into very hell itself. And he didn't give them the formula for salvation to alleviate their distress. He allowed the distress to have its full work.

And when these men came through days later, they were not just saved, they were profoundly converted. But you have to be a heavenly man to preach like that. Because if you have earthly concerns, I'll lose the congregation.

This is confusing them. They'll look for another place where they can go home happy. The heavenly man cannot consider what the result of his obedience is.

He can only perform it. In obedience to what comes down from above. And not what rises up out of himself.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh. And that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Don't marvel that I said you must be born again.

Everything must be born again. Everything must come down from above. That's a startling dependency.

For everything else is not heavenly. There's a must, there's an imperative. Not just for our initial salvation, but our continuation ever after.

It's not comfortable to the flesh that wants to know. That wants to have its assurance and its security. But that which comes down from above is given moment by moment to those who will receive it and express it.

And I was saved because I heard from heaven, from a heavenly man. Yes, the man who picked me up in Switzerland. After I stood for two or three hours in the rain and watched the cars whiz by.

And this man stopped with a new car. And he got out of the car and greeted me. He didn't just give me a hurry up, I'm doing you a favor.

I was suspicious of his exceptional cordiality. Yes, heavenly men will be misunderstood. Even in the church.

And he took my filthy, wet rucksack and put it through the back seat of his car and it ruined his upholstery. He didn't notice. I thought, what manner of man is this? A car for him is only a convenience.

It's not an object of worship. And we drove off and he turned and he looked at me. I was then 34 years old.

He saw that I was not a high school kid out on a lark. He said, I'm not a high school kid. I said, why are you traveling this way? And in the best German that I could find, I said, I'm a modern man whose life is broken at its foundations.

That's exactly the condition in which my people will come into your midst. For our foundations are false. They're philosophical and ideological and earthly.

We don't know the foundations that are heavenly. And before I could finish, I heard myself saying to him, and I'm Jewish. And I thought, how unwise for me to have expressed that.

I wish I could take those words back. And I cautiously turned to see the effect on him. And this man was radiating like a light, glowing.

I'd never seen such a reaction to that news. It certainly did not mean that to me. It was another predicament of my life.

A Jew born in New York, what did I have to do with these Palestinian origins? It was a mystery. Of which he evidently knew more than I. So we insisted that we stop for refreshments. And we had one of those ultimate conversations.

The ultimate expression. What did he say, Art? Nothing. But such listening.

Such attention to my speaking. Such a drawing out of my heart. Till I shared with him the total anguish of my modern soul.

I was the man of the world. And I despaired for the world and was without hope. And what is he going to tell me? University graduate.

Marxist, existentialist, pragmatist. Nothing new under the sun. I had my arms folded over my chest.

Looking at an ordinary Gentile. Nothing outwardly impressive. And he said with his quiet voice, Art, do you know what the world needs? And I leaned forward and I thought to myself, at least he knows how to ask the questions.

Yes, I want to know what the world needs. I'm a piece of the world. We Jews have designed this world.

And it's a world that's dying. I want to know what it needs. And if he had said, are you saved, brother? I would have died.

But he said, what the world needs, Art, is for men to wash one another. And down I went. Struck by God.

Because you need to understand that from my earliest youth I was a seeker after answers and an idealist and a visionary and a romantic for the better world, for human brotherhood, in a whole history of failed idealisms. And I was a seeker after justice and had my ideals and all kinds of ideas. And the whole thing included a failed marriage to a German wife who had been a Hitler youth and human reason was not enough and goodwill was not enough and we were reenacting together under our own roof the ages-old tragedy without answer, without answer.

So when he said what men need is to wash one another's feet, I had never read that because I had never read the Bible I was a typical Jewish biblical illiterate. I could quote you Marx and Freud but not my own book. And the power of that word pierced me through and before I could recover he was speaking to me the gospel in German and I wanted to complain that's not for me it's for the Goyim, I'm a Jew, we have our own book.

But I could not find my voice and I had to receive his words in the name of Jesus in which we Jews have been persecuted for 2000 years and the very city of Esslingen which is so dear to me from my early days in Germany as a GI I learned later that the whole Jewish community of Esslingen was burnt alive and was locked into its own synagogue when the crusaders came through to loot and to pillage the Jewish communities on their way to the Holy Land. I knew he was speaking the words of truth and life but how could it come in the name of Jesus?

I was staggered and bewildered and left in that condition and have never seen that man again but I've tried to find him all the times I've been back to the Zurich Winterthur area asking the Christians do you know an Edwin and he was an accountant in an automobile agency and he sang in the choir in the church and he knew about art and writers no one has ever heard of him and was it a man or an angel and unless my people ask that question after they meet you they have not been touched by heaven angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man that's the greater thing that Jesus showed Nathaniel and wants to show us the house of God God is in this place because it's rooted in the earth but it ascends to heaven John says in chapter 3 verse 31 he that comes from above is above all he that

is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth he that comes from heaven is above all do you believe that moment by moment do you realize that if you even quote John 3.16 you might be doing the earthly thing merely because you invoke scripture does not necessarily make it heavenly unless God himself has given that from above can you live in that dependency for what must come down from above for that which is above is above all not just in the religious and the spiritual realm but in all of our life above all in 1 Corinthians we read that that which is not first is spiritual but that which is natural and afterward that which is spiritual the first man is of the earth earthly the second man is the Lord from heaven as is the earthly such are they also that are earthly and as is the

heavenly such are they also that are heavenly when you read the scriptures of the last days it describes two categories of people those that dwell on the earth and those that dwell in heaven while they are in the earth and the earthly their hearts fail them for fear when they see the things that are coming upon the earth how shall you not share that fear as you live in the same earth with them and watch the horrendous things that will take place economically and politically and socially because you live in the earth but you don't dwell there your essential existence is from above you have your citizenship in heaven I'm feeling again the resistance of unbelief even the resistance of unwillingness of the people who prefer the earth to heaven but with Sunday services more Nicodemus than they

are of Jesus but here is the promise of God as we have borne the image of the earthly we shall also bear the image of the heavenly how will he form that image in us he will send the word and the faith for it which will come by hearing even such a word as may be coming this morning has its origin in heaven to impart a faith that will bring you to the heavenly place and then it's for you to maintain it I'm not sure what I'll be speaking tonight but this may be preliminary to that for how shall you believe for heavenly reward the crown that is given to the overcomer who bears the sufferings of the faith in the earth except that he sees by the eye of the spirit the heavenly thing but who are you we are only dangerous in proportion as we are also heavenly for only the heavenly threaten the

kingdoms of darkness and of earth so set your affections on the things which are above and not on the earth I came into my son's room some years ago he was a boy in high school he was doing his Sunday service he was doing his homework the radio was on loud noise music and there was junk all over his desk and he found a little place to put down his book and scribble his few answers and I exploded I said what's that set yourself to do your work shut the cup and turn the radio off give yourself undistractedly to what is before you for this is not unto the teacher but unto the Lord which to God I had had students like that when I was a teacher I would not have had to wait until I was 35 to get saved they would have challenged me day by day not in giving me predictable earthly answers that

were safe for them so they could obtain their grades but they would seek their answers from above and write in papers to me mysterious bewildering things which would have created a crisis coming from Gentile

students whose earthly ability I knew and was not impressed but unfortunately I did not hear from heaven for they did not seek heaven they gave earthly answers to earthly questions because they wanted to succeed in the earth set your affections on the things which are above shut off the radio the video or the TV every earthly thing that draws your attention away and seek that which is above set yourself up heaven is not a convenient category we can't turn on and off like a water faucet it's going to take a struggle to break the powers of the earth and begin to release us into heavenly

things and then to maintain it when every day you'll be tempted to give earthly answers sufficient for earthly needs that leave men unaffected from above I praise God that Jesus was not such a one he was a son of God who while he was in the earth was yet in heaven and he gave heavenly answers bewildering answers confounding all the earthly categories and the end thereof was the salvation of a Pharisee the man of the earth for you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God in Colossians chapter 3 when Christ who is our life shall appear then shall you also appear with him in glory my last statement for this morning you thought it would never come because you're earthly watching the clock wondering about lunch and what you're going to do today this is eschatological expectancy when

the Christ who is our life shall appear are you living in that heavenly anticipation not only in that moment when he indeed comes as king but in every moment when the Christ who is our life shall appear that's my faith for this morning's preaching just coming with one word heaven and trusting for words that will come down from heaven moment by moment and if they don't come then his life is not revealed and you're left with your face sticking out and the congregation and the leadership saying well, I don't think we'll hear from him again and that's more than the issue of future meetings the issue of future relationships particularly in the mystery of Israel and the church the stakes were high this morning and so were they also when I had no inspiration or thought of how to speak it's

always a strange tension to be in the earth but to be dependent on above it is the faith that will make you strange but God is not ashamed to call those his people and to be their God and he has built for them a city and not every believer will inhabit it and I'll speak about that tonight so let's pray heaven more heaven especially in Deutschland oh God heaven more heaven break into this earth into its categories, into its mentality its limited expectations its love for earthly things its lack of vision for the purposes of God its selfishness and self-centeredness its shallow religiosity heaven more heaven that there might be a gate to heaven for the Nicodemuses whom you will worship that the many Nicodemuses whom you will send the earthly men, the ultimate men of the earth that they can

hear a word from heaven for those who can speak it because they trust God for it because even while they are in the earth they are in heaven let it be this people in this city with this history and in all Deutschland gates to heaven for the Jacobs who will come and be waken from their sleep God is in this place and I knew it now this is the house of God this is the gate to heaven and this is the mystery of God for the end of the age let it be Lord by a people who will trust the spirit that lifts where it will and don't need to know where it's coming or where it's going because they haven't because they are sent from heaven and trust heaven for Jesus in whose name we pray Amen

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