



"Do dogs go to heaven?"

For some reason I keep getting asked this question over and over. It's really not difficult to figure out why. Dogs (and cats, and gerbils and whatever other pets you may have) can quickly become 'part of the family.' And sometimes they are easier to deal with than the human members of the family. The dog doesn't talk back, always listens and shows you unconditional love (At least, that's what we think. It could be they are just being nice to us, so they can get more treats.)

We have two dogs (plus a cat), so I decided to check with them to see if they had any insight into the question. They looked up at me with those adoring eyes. I'm sure they were just thinking, "Maybe he has treats."

Sometimes the best answer to a question is a simple, "I really don't know." And that's the answer I'd have to give. I can say "I hope so," but I can't go so far as to replace "hope" in that sentence with another four-letter word: "know." I do hope so, but I don't know so.

I can say, though, that I am convinced that there will be animals in eternity. The end of the Bible - the book of Revelation - depicts God restoring people and the earth to their original condition. We look to the first few chapters of the first book of the Bible for clues about that original condition. The most important part of that original condition is that human beings will have a perfect relationship with God. We will live in His visible, audible presence and really understand Him. The Apostle Paul describes our understanding of God here on earth as looking through a really fogged-up glass. In eternity, though, we will see/understand God with perfect clarity - no more fog.

But one of the other things we find in the perfect world that God created was.... ANIMALS. All kinds of them. And when God destroyed the world by a flood and started over with just Noah and seven others, the vast majority of the passengers God saved on that ark were.... ANIMALS. It's quite apparent to me that God has a very important place in His creation - and re-creation in eternity - for animals. I have no doubts that God will have animals in eternity along with us humans.

The question that remains unanswered, however, is this: "Will the *specific* animals who were part of our families here on earth be with us in eternity?"

The story is told that one of Martin Luther's kids asked him that same question. Luther answered it by saying, "If, when you get to heaven, you want your dog there, it will be there." (The idea being that in heaven we will have everything we want.) But Luther followed that comment up with this: "The real question is this: "When you get to heaven, will you still want your dog there?" (The idea being that some things that are important to us on this earth will no longer be important to us in eternity.)

I would have to say in answer to that, that I see no reason why animals that were important to us here would all of a sudden not be important in an eternity where there will be animals.

But as for the question, "Will *my* dog be in heaven?" The best I can say is, "I don't know for sure, but I sure do hope so."

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net