

# “News from Heaven”

May 7, 2017  
John 4: 7-14; 2 Cor. 4:6-7; 1 Cor. 13: 12

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Way back in the last century, (the early 60's, to be exact) I was a student at Carleton University. One of my professors of French literature was a very smart and engaging man -- professeur Jean Ethier-Blais. At the end of every course, he always told his students that he firmly believed in-- and was seeking -- the fountain of youth, the spring of water that gives eternal life. He asked us to help him in that search, saying simply: "I'm sure it's out there. If you find it, please let me know."

I never did -- let him know, I mean. So today I'm going to do my best to share what I have discovered with you.

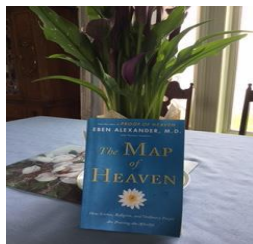
Last Sunday -- wow! We were so blessed to have here with us Rev. Dr. Peter Short, whose soul- stirring sermon brought us to the depths of the human experience, and of the eternal nature of life. In other words, when our bodies die, we go home to where we came from in the first place.

This morning I'd like to look at new scientific evidence and personal experiences that shed light on the subject of eternal life.

One quick disclaimer-- don't expect tips about the fountain of youth! -- but I'll do my best on the rest. Remember the story of Jesus meeting a woman at a well? He says to her "The water that I give will become a fountain of water springing up into eternal life."

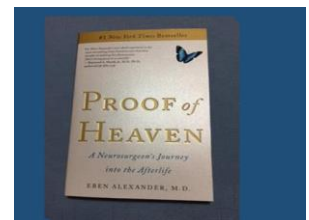
Then in 2 Cor.4:7, we read: "*But we have this treasure,*" meaning our living spirit, "in earthen vessels, in perishable containers, our weak bodies,— to prove that this all-surpassing power comes from God, and not from us."

Each one of us here is a treasure, a gift from God. We were given at birth a body and a soul to nourish & value & protect. The body is fragile, aging, temporary... but it houses a soul that is not. How many of you here have read the bestselling book by Dr. Eben Alexander, '*Proof of Heaven*'?



How about the one that followed it, '*The Map of Heaven*'?

These books are groundbreaking in connecting modern science & religion. Dr. Alexander is a highly respected neurosurgeon. Several of his patients, after undergoing brain surgery, told him stories of trips to heaven and back. He didn't believe



them, writing these stories off as hallucinations. That is, until it happened to him. In 'The Map of Heaven', he says:

*"The sudden onset of a very rare strain of bacterial meningitis put me in a hospital, and a deep coma, for seven days. During that time, I journeyed through a series of supra-physical realms, each one more extraordinary than the last."*

On his journey, after passing through some murky darkness, he meets his guardian angel. Here is his comment on that encounter:

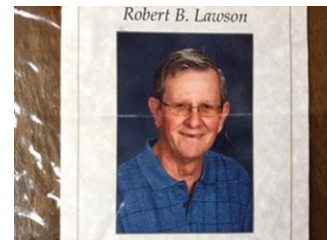
*"My wound was a lifelong subconscious struggle with feeling unworthy of being loved, resulting from my abandonment and adoption as an infant. In my Near-Death Experience, my guardian angel gave me the supreme unconditional love that so many other out-of-body journeyers have come to know so well. Thus began my profound healing."*

For those with access to Internet please watch him on this video-clip.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=3AGNnOk6dhA>

Since the huge success of 'Proof of Heaven,' Dr. Alexander has been on speaking tours, and many who heard him sent him their own stories of NDE's. He shares some of these stories in "Map of Heaven." I know that some of you here this morning have your own such stories, experienced by you or loved ones. I'd like to share two stories that are connected with this church.

Last week I was chatting with a faithful member of this church, whose picture just happened to be on the front page of Thursday's paper, Justine Lawson. Her husband Bob Lawson passed away from cancer 7 years ago. I remember chatting with him after church here shortly before he died, and seeing the light in his eyes -- because he had already died twice, and come back.

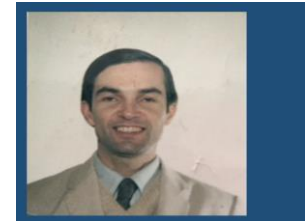


The first time he went into cardiac arrest he was in the Kingston hospital, and Justine and their daughter Robin were with him. Doctors & nurses shooed them out the door. Bob left too. He watched it all from outside, through the window. The nurses were using paddles, and Bob actually saw himself hitting a young doctor. He was revived, and remembered everything. His second cardiac arrest happened in an elevator, again with doctors & nurses with him. This time, when he left his body, he watched from outside the elevator door as a nurse pounded him. Before returning, Bob saw the tunnel to heaven, and it was filled with light. He told Justine "It was so bright -- oh, so bright!"

My husband Alan visited Bob in the hospital, as did Rev. Rob Roy McGregor, who urged him to share his experiences. So he did, especially in Alpha & Beta groups that were meeting at that time.

Later, after five series of radiation and chemo treatments, Bob said "No more. I think it's time to go home." As Justine put it, "He was so, so ready!"

And one more story, about my brother Kenny. It was a Sunday morning in June of 1996, and I came to church early (which anyone who knows me might find hard to believe!) to join a pre-worship prayer group up in the Living Room. I wanted to pray for my brother, who was dying from oral cancer. I wanted to plead with God to heal him.



Kenny was a teacher of transcendental meditation, a gentle soul with such brightness in his eyes and smile. Vegetarian and celibate, he was a member of the holiest order in the movement, a Purusha. They are specially dedicated to meditation and teaching. I had just visited him the week before at his Maharishi Vedic Centre in southern Quebec. We went for a walk through the woods. Energetic and hopeful, he was quite convinced he would beat this cancer. None the less, he said: *"If I do die, don't hold on to me. Let me fly! I want to fly high, higher than the sky!"*

So the next Sunday morning I was up in the Living Room. Just one other woman was with me – a faithful friend in prayer. I shared with her my fears and pain, but not the conversation in the woods. We prayed. I begged God to heal my brother. She also prayed for him, then continued on her own in prayer and praise. Then silence. When she spoke again, she said "Wendy."

It was a wake-up call that went to the depth of my being. Never had I heard my name spoken with such authority or with such love. I knew it wasn't my friend. I knew, without a shadow of a doubt, that God was speaking to me, and that I was about to find out if my brother would live or die. Fear overwhelmed me -- a fear that went way beyond the fate of my brother. I was afraid of God.

The message continued: *"Wendy, don't be afraid. I will take your brother to be with me soon. Do not cling to him, let him go. You will see him again. I will take him soon. Let him go."*

Then the strangest thing happened. With tears just streaming down my face, I felt the deepest joy I have ever known. Ever since, whenever I feel a trace of this joy, I recognize the presence of God.

Kenny died two weeks later, a day before we planned to visit him again. He was 47 years old, and widely known and loved. The funeral was surreal. It began at the Vedic Centre with the Hindu ceremony of Puja in Sanskrit, then continued across the road at a small Anglican Church, in French.

I was living simultaneously in two dimensions: this world, trapped in time and space, where death is the end of life and the best we can manage is a fatalistic acceptance of despair, and another dimension beyond time and space as we experience them, where God is, where joy is, and where death is a birth into new life.

One more quote from Dr. Eben Alexander:

*"My story is a further hint from the universe and the loving God at work in it that the time of bossy science and bossy religion is over, and that a new marriage of the better, deeper parts of the scientific and spiritual sensibilities is going to occur at last."*

We have trouble seeing spiritual reality. We are surrounded by a spiritual dimension that we glimpse occasionally, accidentally, wonder about, and then relegate to the back burner as we continue our daily struggle to survive, to serve, and to achieve. But the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, is in us. *"For now we see through a glass, a mirror, darkly, but then we shall see face to face."*

God loves us, and he has wonderful plans for us, both here on earth, and in our eternal future. God loves us where we are -- and He loves us much too much to leave us here.

Amen.

Let us pray. *Lord God, lead us to your fountain of living water, that we may be filled with your loving Spirit, now and forever. Amen.*