

Pentecost 4
June 21, 2015

"Our Future Glory Makes Us Happy Campers"

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10

Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, ³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. ⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ We live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

You have heard the expression, "He's not a happy camper." This familiar saying arose from the summer camps thirty or forty years ago. Counselors had a way of describing the kid who was upset with other kids, homesick, complaining about the food and grumbling about being outdoors. They said "He's not a happy camper." I pray that children attending our Bible camp this week will be happy campers. I pray even more that they might learn about Jesus and his love for them.

"He's not a happy camper." That would certainly not be the way the Paul describes his life in the words we just read to you. He pictures his life and your life on this earthy as camping in a tent with our real home in heaven with the Lord. Even though the days in this tent can be difficult we are happy because of the glory that will be ours in the future.

I want to be a happy camper for the Lord. I don't want to grumble and complain about life. I want to always keep my eyes focused on the future glory that will be mine. I also want to see with my eyes of faith the great opportunities I have to serve the Lord while camping in this life.

Happy campers see glory in the life to come

The Apostle Paul speaks about living in a tent while his eyes look forward to his permanent home in heaven. "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal home in heaven, not built by human hands." Paul knew a lot about living in tents. In fact he was a tent maker by trade. While he was with the Christians in Corinth he supported himself by making tents. There is a big difference between living in a tent and living in a permanent home. As much as I enjoy sleeping in a tent while on a vacation trip, I would not want to have that tent be my permanent home.

Tents don't last forever. They wear out from the wind and the rain and the sun. So it is with life. We wear out. Remember the time when your tent was so strong, the storms and winds of life could blow and blow but still you were strong. You could make the best of it. Gradually we become older. This past week I was reading from the book of James where it says, "What is your life? You are like mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."

Even though this life is temporary, we have something waiting for us that is permanent. "We have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands." Everything built by human hands has some flaws in it and is subject to decay. The permanent place we have in heaven is built by God and it lasts forever. One of the joys of camping is seeing the stars at night. If you look at the stars you are overwhelmed at how God made the universe in which we live. But then you think beyond the stars to a whole new world, a new heaven and new earth, made by the hand of God and waiting for us in the next life. A girl was walking with her daddy and looking up at the stars in the sky. Then she said, "Daddy, if this is how pretty heaven is on this side, just think of what it must be like on the other side."

We groan and yearn and long for this better world that is coming in the future. "Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked." Paul knew what it was like to live out in the open and be exposed to the elements without a warm bed to sleep at night. He knew that if he did not have a place to live now, he had an eternal home in heaven. Jesus tells us in John 14, "In my Father's house are many rooms" and "I am going to prepare a place for you."

Imagine hiking in the mountains of Colorado or the High Sierras without enough clothes to protect you from the sudden storms and cold winds. The person who is drenched by the rain and shivering from the cold longs to be home where they can be safe and warm. The storms of life will pound you and leave you shivering and cold. Inside of all of us is a yearning and longing for the permanent home in heaven Jesus has prepared for us. It is OK to have these groans and yearning and sighing for our heavenly home. The book of Ecclesiastes says that the Lord has put eternity into our hearts.

We long for death to be swallowed up and defeated. "For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." As long as we are in this life we groan. We are burdened. We are unclothed. We live with the very real prospect of facing death whether we are young or old. Someday what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. The Greek word for swallow is intense. It has the thought of swallowing something completely. It is used in Hebrews 11 to describe how the Lord our God swallowed the Egyptian army in the waters of the Red Sea. It is used in 1 Corinthians 15 where it says, "death has been swallowed up in victory." The Revelation describes the new life waiting for us after we die in this way. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

My dear Christian, if you have longings and groans and sighs for the place the Lord has prepared for you, don't be ashamed of these feelings. Don't think yourself weird and strange. Embrace the reality that the people of this world who are without Christ just

don't understand this yearning you have for your heavenly home.

These groans and sighs for your permanent home in heaven come from the Holy Spirit. "Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." It's the Holy Spirit who puts eternity in our hearts and makes us ache and long for the Garden of Eden to be restored. In Philippians Paul writes, "I long to be depart and be with Christ, which is better by far." Even Jesus prayed that we might be with him and see his glory. "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."

The wonderful Holy Spirit will always keep this hope alive in you and cause it to burn brightly. The Holy Spirit is the deposit or down payment or pledge guaranteeing what it is to come. Romans 8 says, "We who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." The Holy Spirit gives you a taste of what is coming through the promises here in his Word. He creates in you this craving and desire for more and more. The other day I had some cherries from Albertsons. They were the best I have ever tasted. If you tasted one, you wanted more. So it is with the tastes of future glory the Holy Spirit gives us. Luella Bestul once said, "How amazing it is that we have such a longing for a place where have never seen!"

The Holy Spirit makes you a happy camper because you always know the best is yet to come. You are willing to live in this old tent of this life because you can step outside and look up at the stars. The hand of God that created this world has something so much better in the new heavens and near earth, our home of righteousness. Hebrews 11 says, "All these people were living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.....Instead they were looking for a better country, a heavenly one."

Happy campers see glory in this life

Does this mean the only joy we have in life is sitting around waiting for the Lord to take us to our real home? No, dear Christian, the more heaven- minded you become the more you want to carry out your calling here in this life. "Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, and not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether at home in the body or away from it." As hard as it may be to live in this old tent, we are happy campers. We know the best is yet to come. We also see every day on this earth as an opportunity to please the Lord.

You have heard it said that when you die you can't take it with you. You cannot take your money with you or your house and or its furnishings or your clothes. Job said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart." Yet there is something you can take with you and that is the fruit of your labors for the Lord. Everything we do in this life will be judged by Jesus on the day of judgment. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each may receive what is due him for the things done

while in the body, whether good or bad.” How awful it would be to stand before the judge without Christ to wash us clean of our sin. I try to please the Lord with my life, but I fail miserably and so do you. I even fail in my best efforts to love the Lord with all my heart, soul and mind. I fail to love my neighbor as much as I love myself. Yet, I can stand before God in the final judgment because Jesus has washed me clean of every part of life in this old tent where I have failed. Even my best efforts to please God that are pock-marked by sin are washed clean and made acceptable.

Through Jesus I will see the fruit of efforts to please God. I will see how my efforts to be a good father to my children and a good husband to my wife bear fruit in their lives. We will see how our efforts to bring God’s Word to children in our Bible camp will bring fruit in their lives, maybe not now, but in the life to come. The only thing we can take with us to the beautiful home in heaven are the investments we have made in the Jesus and his kingdom. The Revelation says, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “they rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.” We are happy campers. As we live in this old tent we look forward to our permanent home in heaven. As we live in this old tent, we see every day of our lives on this earth as an opportunity to live for Jesus and his glory in thanksgiving for the place has prepared for us.