

Holy Cross, Daggett and St. Mark, Wallace Lutheran Churches, Michigan
The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
June 21, 2015
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. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 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. 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.

Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. 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.

One of the things I have noticed about some people in our congregations is their love of camping. They love to get out in nature and spend time in God's creation during the warm summer months. It can be fun to go camping, but there comes a point where you start to long to get home. You long to sleep in your own bed. You long to have running water in the house. You long to be able to go to the bathroom without a flashlight. You long to have a microwave and a refrigerator.

The apostle Paul tells us about a similar longing in our lesson today. He says, **"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. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked."** Paul reminds us this longing comes from God's work in us.

He reminds us about what our status used to be before God. Paul reminds us we were conceived and born in sin which made us naked in God's sight. Nakedness is usually connected with shame and embarrassment. Usually, we don't like being naked in front of others because we can't hide or cover up our flaws. We wish we could hide them, but can't without clothes. This was our natural status before God. We could do nothing to hide our flaws and our shame was exposed to him.

However, God in his love has covered over our shame by clothing us with the richly ornamented robe of Jesus' righteousness. Jesus' robe of righteousness covers over all of our flaws. It has removed our embarrassment because we no longer stand naked before God. He no longer sees the shame of our sin. He only sees the white robes of Jesus' righteousness which are held together by threads of red woven all throughout the robes.

The red of the threads come from Jesus' blood he shed for us. Jesus experienced the shame of sin for us. He stood naked before God's wrath while he hung naked on a cross. He experienced the worst form of shame which exists in this universe when he was rejected by God while he died for us on the cross. Jesus endured this shame in order for us to be clothed with his righteousness so that we could have an eternal home with him in heaven.

Jesus' righteousness makes heaven (and not earth) our permanent home. We can think of our time on earth as nothing more than going on a camping trip when heaven is our home. It can be fun to go camping, but a tent or a trailer makes us long for home. We long to go home because it means we won't have to live in a tent anymore. We won't have to sleep on the ground anymore. We won't need a flashlight to find the bathroom. We won't be exposed to rain or cold. We will be home.

We long because, **"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. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 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."**

Paul says we long to be at home with the Lord because our life on earth is temporary. This temporary nature causes us to groan under numerous burdens in life. These burdens constantly remind us our life

on earth is temporary and doesn't last forever. We are reminded about the fact earth is a temporary home by numerous things in this world. Our eyesight fails. Our teeth go bad. Our joints break down. Our hearing disappears. We grow tired and faint.

Yet, how often don't we try to reverse the reminders that earth is nothing more than our temporary home? Our eyesight is bad? Fix it with glasses, contacts or surgery to correct our vision or remove cataracts. Our teeth are rotten? Drill them to get rid of the cavities and preserve our teeth. Our joints break down? Replace them with an artificial hip or knee. Our hearing disappears? Get hearing aids or have corrective surgery. Grow tired and faint? Drink a bottle of five hour energy.

We do our best to try to reverse the reminders that life on earth is temporary by eliminating them and making our life as comfortable as possible. We hate and battle against the temporary nature of this world. We long to make our life on this earth permanent and try to do everything in our power to make it permanent. Why do we battle so hard against the temporary nature of this world? Why do we refuse to admit life in this world is like living in a tent?

We don't want to admit this world is temporary. We like living in a tent because part of us is afraid to die. We are afraid to die because we know what is coming. We will be forced to stand naked before God's judgment seat with all our deeds we have ever done exposed before him. It is a scary thought to think of everything we have ever done laid bare where we can't hide it. The prospect of standing naked before God fills us with fear and shame.

What will remove this fear and shame from our hearts? **"Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 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."** We can remember what God has done in our lives. We aren't naked before him. We are clothed with Christ.

We are clothed with Jesus' robe of righteousness. This robe of righteousness covers over all of our sins. God does not look at us and see people who should be afraid or ashamed. He sees his beloved children who his son willingly gave his own life to clothe them with the robe of his righteousness to cover over their shame and embarrassment. Doesn't this promise make you long to be with your Lord? Doesn't it help us realize heaven (not earth) is our permanent home?

The powerful promise that heaven is our home gives a special sense of purpose in this life. Paul tells us about this purpose. **"Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it."**

Paul says we live by faith and not by sight. This is important to remember when fighting the battle against thinking earth is our permanent home. We aren't able to see heaven. We aren't able to talk with God face to face. We only have God's promise that this life is like living in a tent. Yet, it is pleasing to God

for us to live by faith and not by sight because it forces us to rely on him and his promises. It is pleasing to God for us to long to be with him in heaven where death will be swallowed up by life.

We long to be with the Lord because it means we will be at home with him. We won't be away from him. We will be able to see him face to face and our groaning will be gone. We cannot wait to get there, but we are not there yet. God has given each and every single one of us a task which is unique and fitted just for us. He has placed numerous people and opportunities for each and every single one of us to be able to please him while we live by faith and not by sight.

One of the greatest things we can do to please God is to show others our confident longing to be at home with him in heaven. **"We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it."** How can we show this confident longing? We can use our physical failings to show our longing to be with the Lord.

We can display longing to be with the Lord when our eyesight fails. It is fine to have it corrected, but we can show our joy to those around us that we won't need glasses in heaven. We can have our teeth filled and give thanks for the dentists who do it, but we can remind others our teeth won't rot in heaven. Our hearing might fade, but we can express a quiet confidence that God will restore our hearing in heaven. Our joints might give out, but we can realize our body will be restored in our permanent home.

Camping is a fun way to spend time together outdoors as a family. However, we soon long to return to the comforts of home. Our journey on earth is like a camping trip because it makes us long to be at home in heaven. We thank God for working this longing into our heart by his powerful promise that he has clothed us with Christ and covered our sins. We ask him to help us display this longing in our lives to the people around us. Amen.