

2 Corinthians 5:1-10  
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost  
June 20, 2021

With the arrival of summer we think of traveling. Well, last year not so much—we missed a lot of things then. With restrictions lifting and vaccines readily available people are resuming going places. Perhaps you have vacation plans.

We are on a journey as Christians. Today we will look at our trip and its destination.

### TRAVEL THROUGH LIFE WITH GOD

- I. With anticipation of heaven
- II. With the Spirit as a deposit
- III. With confidence at judgment

We're traveling through life with God but our focus is on the end of the journey. We live with anticipation of heaven because life now is temporary. Paul compared life on earth with a nomadic lifestyle. Lots of people traveled as they needed new places of pasture or other resources for their herds and flocks. So they lived in tents that could be set up and taken down as needed. That's why the text spoke of the earthly tent in which we live. It was referring not just to our physical body but to our whole existence on this planet. It doesn't last. Items wear out; resources are used up. At one point it will be destroyed, the Apostle noted. Nothing earthly lasts forever.

In the meantime, during our trip through life, problems occur. We experience physical ailments, losses of both loved ones and possessions, disappointments and failures. There are troubles that come as the consequence of our sinful behavior and from the attacks of opponents. That is why we heard about groaning and being burdened. Life here, while bringing many blessings, is tough. We long for a better existence.

And we have it. Life in heaven is waiting. "We have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands." Our blessed future location will be overflowing with everything that is needed, with happiness and joy. In your travels, or sometimes just looking out the window at a sunrise or a sunset, we see beauty that leads us to marvel at our Creator. Heaven exceeds all that we view in this world. It will be absolutely wonderful. It will never fade, spoil or be used

up. That's why Paul called it eternal. We look forward to that home with anticipation.

We shall experience life as God intended it to be. "What is mortal may be swallowed up by life." All things from our present existence will be ended, gone from the scene and replaced by perfection. As you will remember from last week, perfection is what Adam and Eve lost when they chose to follow Satan and sin. Heaven returns paradise.

Some people hear of tenting and get excited. The people of Israel held an annual Feast of Booths, when they set up temporary dwellings to remind themselves how their forefathers lived in tents while they made the journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land. It was a time of celebration, a religious holiday and a break from routine. So camping can be a vacation, a time of relaxation away from the pace of work and other obligations. Many people take camping vacations in their younger years. But I note that as the years go by, families tend to move up from tent camping to a camper, then to an RV with all the comforts of home. Or they quit camping altogether. Many of us also didn't camp for the whole trip but spent a few nights in motels, to have a break from the work involved with camping. It's nice to have a soft bed instead of a leaky air mattress to spend the night on and a bathroom that you don't have to walk a long distance to reach in the dark. We had frequent encounters with rain while camping, so a roof over our heads was appreciated in bad weather. We didn't have to wonder whether we would have drips coming through the ceiling or a stream in the side nor worry about the wind blowing the tent away. Those of us who enjoy traveling still find it is good to return to a permanent home, not one you have to set up and take down every time you want to visit a new area or discover what you forgot to bring along. So we anticipate and long for our permanent home prepared for us in heaven.

## II.

We don't have to wait for blessings from God as we travel through life with him. We have much good now with the Spirit as a deposit. Many transactions involve a deposit. When making an offer to buy a house you put down earnest money. There is a down payment required for many purchases. Those advance funds are your assurance that you will make the rest of the payment and serve as a guarantee to you that the item is yours. God gives us the Spirit as a deposit on our blessed future. How do we know we have the Spirit? It's not based on feelings, for they can fluctuate. Some days we may be on fire for the Lord; others, less so. Even within a day we may vary in intensity of feelings. The Spirit was given to us at our baptism. Peter invited the Pentecost crowd, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will

receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." We get another dose of the Spirit when we use God's Word and when we receive Holy Communion. The Spirit gives testimony that heaven is ours. We know it not by experience but we are just as sure because we have God's Word on it and his Word is reliable.

The deposit of the Spirit in our hearts affects our life. We are not shaken when troubles come. We simply take them as a reminder of earth's futility and temporary nature. Accumulation of its goods is not our goal and purpose for being here, for they do not last. We resist the doubts that troubles bring or that Satan whispers in our ear, suggesting that God must not love us or care about us. Even, or we might say, especially, in the face of death, we are not fearful. (Well, maybe a little bit, for it is an unnatural occurrence and a venture into the unknown, for we haven't been there before.) However, we have one who has returned from the dead and is ready to lead us safely to our destination. Therefore we view death merely as the doorway we pass through to enter heaven.

With the Spirit within us as a deposit we live to please God. Knowing what is to come, we want to get ready for life there. We want to live as citizens of heaven, as God's family members. We strive to obey his commandments. Doing so is not an effort to earn heaven. We already possess it. Rather, our life is a thank you for all our Lord has done in securing it for us. We fight sin and seek what is right and good.

The Spirit supplies the power for this new life, for we would lack it on our own. He leads us to say no to temptation and instead to follow God's commands to honor him and to help the people placed around us. We let our light shine to bring glory to his name.

That is why we keep taking in God's message, to receive the power of the Spirit. We use his law as our guide, to open our eyes to opportunities to do good. As we heard in today's Gospel reading, the seed planted in us sprouts and grows. As we share it with others, God's kingdom increases.

### III.

Our journey has a destination. As we travel with God through life we arrive with confidence at judgment. Judgment Day is coming for everyone. "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." We may wish to put thoughts of accountability and judgment out of mind, but we will not escape it. The Judge knows all, so will render the correct verdict. No clever lawyer will be able to get us off. There will be no miscarriage of justice. As a result, thoughts of

being judged could be scary, knowing ourselves and our sins. God sees even more violations of his law than we know about.

We know something more than our sins: we know the Judge. He is the one who took our guilt upon himself and already paid the price. Jesus removed all sins from our account. Instead we see the credit side filled with his goodness. We have the standing of holy before God.

You and I cannot see the heart. Faith receives God's blessings but it is invisible. However, there is evidence. The faith in our hearts shows in our lives, in those fruits of faith the Spirit produces. We recognize our attempts to serve God are imperfect, but his perfection fills in the gaps and covers over our lack of righteousness.

Faith is the key. Unbelievers may do some grand works, benefitting many with millions of dollars but if the act does not come from faith it is an insult to God and merits nothing before him. Doing his will is believing in Jesus as your Savior. Trust him and have the confidence that you will hear the verdict that heaven is your home when you stand at the Last Day before his judgment seat.

Several years ago our congregation in Lake Mills had an entry in our Town and Country Days parade. To correlate with the theme of the parade those of us who walked with our float had bright t-shirts that declared, "Life is a trip." That describes what we have been talking about today. We have many experiences along the way. You can travel with certainty because your Lord guides you, better than a GPS or a triple A map. He is there to recall you when you detour or wander from the route. He assures you that your needs will be supplied—no closed restaurants or markets when you are hungry. Follow him with confidence given by the deposited Spirit that a No Vacancy sign won't stare you in the face when you arrive at your heavenly destination. He will have more than the light on for you. He will have the welcome sign out and the loving arms of your Savior will greet you. Happy travels with God!