

Second Sunday after Pentecost

June 7, 2015

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Tenting Prior to Moving into our Permanent House

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Dear Friends in Christ Jesus,

Many of us have some experience living in temporary quarters. For the sake of our meditation this morning, we'll call that "tenting" whatever type of domicile it was. Perhaps it was literally a "tent."

Before we could move into our apartment for my vicar year, we lived for a month in the principal's house while they were away on vacation. We have members who lived or are now living in a residence hotel or apartment while they searched for a permanent house. The point is that this "tenting" is only temporary and passing until we finally get to our lasting house.

This is the way we Christians are to think about this life on earth in our mortal bodies. We are tenting for a short time. Its fine and we are truly blessed daily. However, don't we long to be home in our eternal mansion Jesus has prepared for us?

As we enter the non-festival half of the church year with its overview of the Christian life, we begin by affirming with the apostle Paul that at the present time, we are **Tenting Prior to Moving into our Permanent House**. We have an eternal house in heaven. We are sure of getting there.

The chapter break at 5 does not indicate a new thought. The apostle had been sharing with the Corinthians his thoughts on his ministry among them. He had been honest and straight forward with them by preaching only God's Word. Not everyone accepted that Word and even persecuted the apostle and those who shared in his ministry. Everything they had done has been for the believers' benefit and to God's glory.

Paul summarized all this by saying, "Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart." That little word "for" at the beginning of chapter 5 continues his thought. "For 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."

Isn't this what we know? The earthly tent we live in is more than our mortal bodies. Our earthly tent includes everything we experience in this life, good and evil. The earthly tent we live in is what Job expressed in chapter 14, "Mortals, born of woman, are of few days and full of trouble." Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes, "I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind." 1:14.

In this temporary tenting we groan. In this temporal life we are "naked, burdened" because we are unclothed. We are apart from our heavenly dwelling. We are mortal and away from the very purpose for which God made us, that we should live with him forever in heaven.

We have an eternal house in heaven. God "fashioned us for this very purpose" that we be clothed with that eternal dwelling." Jesus told his disciples that he was going to prepare a place for us. Our Savior did just that by making his holy life a sacrifice for our sin on the cross. When we die or when Jesus returns, we no longer will be naked and burdened clothed in this mortality. That tenting will be "swallowed up by life."

We know this because God has given us the Holy Spirit "as a deposit." We call that earnest money, a down payment, the first part of the guaranteed rest of it. The Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts as Christians. His presence is our assurance that we are only tenting for now. The Spirit is the guarantee that soon we will move into our permanent house. This house is unique. Human hands did not build it. The hands of God in Christ built it by stretching out on the beam of a Roman cross. Our Savior now raises those hands over us in blessing and points the way to our eternal house.

We are sure of getting there. Paul's earlier thoughts on ministry and this life included Jesus' resurrection, the successful spread of the gospel, and our momentary troubles working a greater glory as we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

Twice Paul wrote about our confidence and knowledge of the temporary versus the eternal. We long to be with Jesus in heaven. We long to be clothed in the permanent. "We live by faith not by sight."

We live with faith in what is coming not by looking at what is taking place in the moment. You likely have heard someone say, "It is the journey not the destination that is important." Nothing could be further from the truth in our lives as Christians. It is entirely the destination that is important. During the journey in our nakedness and burdens

unclothed with our eternal house, we do not live with our eyes on “the pie in the sky.” We live with a deep longing the Holy Spirit works in us for our permanent house in heaven.

With that longing we make it our goal to please him because of that eternal house that awaits us. That is what we are about as Christians both while tenting and later in heaven. Every day we live to please God not to earn his favor but because of his unearned and undeserved love for us in our Redeemer. In heaven we will live to please God because we will be perfectly holy.

Paul looks forward with confidence, as do we, to the time when all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. We will receive what we have coming to us because of what we did while tenting, “whether good or bad.” Good means everything that flows from a believing heart. Evil means everything that flows from a heart of unbelief.

The judgment seat of Christ is the entrance, the front door so to speak, to our permanent house. For the child of God, the door stands open as we stand before it covered in Christ’s blood and righteousness. The Holy Spirit is the down payment on that dwelling. We live by faith not by sight, with knowledge and confidence, to our journey’s completion. Amen. <SDG>