

Wednesday, February 14, 2018 – Ash Wednesday
“Yearning for Home”

1 Peter 1: 8-12

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Calling Us Home – CSL Series

Proverbial Structure

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Lent is about Jesus Christ. Our sermon text is 1 Peter 1:8–12 and it begins this way.

“Though you have not seen Him, you love Him.” Is that true? Do you love Him? I don’t mean do you know about Him in your head. Of course you do. I’m not asking if you know things about His life. Sure you do. No, the question is this, do you love Him?

Years ago I heard a story about a married couple going someplace in the car, the husband was driving. The wife was lamenting that the romance of their youth had gone out of their marriage. I wonder how the husband took that! Anyway, the wife recalled that when they were first married they used to sit close together in the front seat of the car. The husband smiled and said, “I haven’t moved away.”

Do you love Jesus? I can’t answer for you but can only answer for myself. Yes, I love Him but I certainly don’t love Him the way I ought. Sometimes I move away from Him. You will probably admit that you do too. I need, we all need this penitential season of Lent. Lent gives you and me the opportunity to reflect on our journey, not just our journey from this Ash Wednesday to Easter but our bigger journey through life to our eternal home with God. If you take this Lent seriously, and I pray you will, you’ll see that life is not just “ashes to ashes and dust to dust.” Take this Lenten journey seriously and you’ll see that it’s Lent to Easter; it’s ashes to glory and dust to glorified bodies in our new heavenly home. Here’s the promise: Take this Lenten journey seriously and you’ll love Jesus more and more because you’ll be more convinced than ever that Jesus is the way to your true home.

Have you ever yearned to go home to the people you love? Sure you have; we all have. A young person goes off to college, filled with excitement and apprehension. If that brand new college student came from a good home, there’s a yearning for the holidays when she can get back home. If you have served in the military, served overseas, or been in combat, you know the yearning for home. When you go on a vacation, as enjoyable as it might be, you eventually say, “It’ll be good to get back home.” And that yearning for home is true on a daily basis as well.

We go to work and look forward to the end of the day, to going home and to rest. We all know the feeling of yearning for home, the feeling of yearning to be at peace with the people we love. So I'll say it again: Lent reminds us that we're on a journey, a journey to our eternal home with God. We love Jesus because He's our way home.

St. Peter wrote this passage to people who yearned for home in a way we can't really appreciate. The recipients of his letter didn't have an earthly home and earthly country the way you and I have our homes and our country. They lived in what we today call Turkey. They were legal aliens, not citizens as you and I are. They tended to be poor. They were have-nots who wished they could have more. Some of them were slaves, despised and subject to beatings. They were a minority in society, unlike us Christians, the majority in America. They yearned for a home like we can't imagine. St. Peter couldn't change their status but he did invite them to see their lives as a journey to their true home. Peter told them and tells us, how blessed we are that Jesus is leading us on our journey to our true home.

"Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, "obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls." Our journey is toward salvation. Although our circumstances are different than those people long ago, we're yearning for deliverance just like them. The troubles you have, the ills that beset you, all the unwanted stuff that sin causes in our lives... You're journeying toward your full salvation when the former things will be no more. Who can imagine what our true home will be like? "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9; NIV). Keep yearning for home!

Peter continues, "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully." The Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, tell us about the great gift, the grace as Peter says, that God is giving to you and to me. Peter says the ages have focused on what we hear in Lent. Specifically he says that the prophets were "inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories." Lent is about Jesus. Christian life is all about Jesus. This Lent we will rehearse again what the Scriptures say about His suffering

to save us from our sins. In Lent we figuratively put on sackcloth and figuratively get down into ashes to repent for our sins but our blessing is that Jesus lifts us up with forgiveness.

And this Lent we won't forget that Easter is coming. Without Easter our journey toward eternity is a literal dead end. With Easter, there is life and the salvation of our souls. Scriptures radiate His resurrection and His ascension, what Peter calls "the subsequent glories." If you and I take this Lent seriously, how can we not grow in our love of Jesus? How can we not more and more yearn for our true home?

Peter concludes this section by saying, "It was revealed to them (that is, to the Old Testament prophets) that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look." All of this, all this in the Bible, all Lent, all the church does, it's all God's grace to you. This is so precious that Peter says even says the angels long to look into the things we hear in church. Shhhh! Can you hear their wings fluttering as they hover here, unseen, listening to the Good News of Jesus Christ? Hear it again. "It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."

So let's use this Lent to love Jesus more and more because His passion and resurrection are leading us to our true home. God didn't want the people in ancient Turkey to settle in too much. He doesn't want us to settle too much into our present lives. A little discontent, a desire for something better, a desire for our true home is good. It makes us appreciate how blessed we are. In Psalm 73 it says, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." We're not there yet but we are yearning. Jesus, we love you. You're leading us home. Don't let us move away! Amen.