

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Philippians 3:17–4:1**

**Sermon: “Heaven is Our Home”**

Both the Old Testament Reading and the Gospel for this Second Sunday in Lent show the way faithful prophets of God are hated, rejected, and persecuted. Jeremiah was sent by God to warn the people and preach repentance. Even when threatened with death, he would not compromise his message to save his life; neither did Jesus Christ. Our Lord knew he would die, and yet it was his deep compassion that moved him to complete his mission of suffering and dying for sinners.

Both texts show us the Lord longs to save his people, yet the reason some are not saved is also revealed: they are not willing. Similarly, in our Epistle, Paul speaks of many whose ultimate end is destruction. As the people in the days of Jeremiah and Jesus were unwilling to repent and receive the Lord, so also in Paul’s day, many chose to live as enemies of the cross of Christ. God’s gift of forgiveness and salvation are freely given.

Still some chose to reject these gifts and even become hostile to those who walk in faith trusting in the Lord knowing that heaven is our home. Against these enemies and the temptation to join with them or compromise, we are to stand firm (Philippians 4:1).

It is interesting and ironic that the same man who called himself *“the worst of sinners”* (1 Timothy 1:16) also tells people to imitate him! When Paul offers himself as an example to follow, he is not being hypocritical or vain. Paul saw himself as a forgiven sinner, not some super-saint who did no wrong. He writes *“For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain.”* (1 Corinthians 15:9–10) Paul knew that it was only by the grace of God that he was saved and able to live a godly life, and he was always quick to give all the glory to God for his life. In our text from Philippians, Paul offers himself as a role model to show what a citizen of heaven should look like.

Role models are important because we all learn by watching them. Sadly, in this world there are so many bad role models that our young people look up to, we need to attempt to be good role models, even with all our short comings or at least point them toward other good role models. Ultimately, pointing them to Christ.

With Christ we walk knowing that this is all temporary and fleeting, this is not our home, we are foreigners in this world. We are on a journey, our goal is not the things of this world, the money, the power and fame. We walk with Christ toward a new and permanent home, in heaven. So, we should never feel as though we are completely at home on this earth. We live here for now, but we do not belong here. Our home is with our Father in his heavenly kingdom. In fact, as foreigners in this world, we should view the ways of this world as also foreign to us. This is what Paul wanted the congregation at Philippi to know as he wrote to them.

Being citizens of God's kingdom by His grace, we resist the temptations of this world and anxiously await our Savior and our heavenly homeland.

So, we are to imitate Paul, an example of heavenly citizenship remembering that heaven is our home. Not, Paul who'd been a Pharisee, a legalist, zealous and exemplary in behavior, but captive to the law of sin. But Paul the new man, delivered and forgiven by Christ. This Paul had abandoned what lay behind: the *“worldly way”* of trying to earn God's favor as well as the primordial muck of gratifying one's basest appetites. This Paul was straining forward to the upward call of God living each day as a momentary investment in his and others' eternity.

It was just a few verses before our text that Paul writes; *“But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”* Paul was a wealthy man, the Pharisee of Pharisee's but believed it all worthless rubbish compared to having Christ.

Unfortunately, even heaven's citizens us Christians are tempted to worldliness (3:18–19). We often long for earthly prizes and treasures. Our minds can become set on earthly things. How often do our bellies, so to speak become our gods? We can become secure in our sins. So, some citizens of heaven fall away. They come to walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end will be destruction, body and soul, in hell.

But God has made us heavenly citizens who wait anxiously for our Savior's return. Our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, opened heaven to us by his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. By grace, God has made us citizens of that heaven through Holy Baptism.

As heaven's citizens, we anxiously await our Savior's return. We occupy our minds with heavenly thoughts (worship, devotion, Bible study, and prayer). We eat heavenly food.

A nice thing about living in a big city is that you have access to all kinds of cultural foods, Mexican, Chinese, and Italian restaurants like everywhere else, but you can also find Japanese, Greek, Thai, Peruvian, German, Korean, Brazilian, and the list goes on and on.

Each culture has its own unique food, and eating the food is a way to celebrate the culture.

That in a way is what we do here on Sunday mornings. Since our true homeland is heaven, our congregation celebrates our heavenly cultural identity by eating heavenly food. We do this whenever we receive Holy Communion. Eating this heavenly food helps us remember who we are. We are sinners forgiven by the very body and blood of Jesus Christ, which was given and shed for us for the forgiveness of our sins. This heavenly food not only reminds us of who we are, but it also reminds us of who our Savior is and what he has done for us. For this reason, this food not only reminds us of our cultural identity, it also creates it.

For as often as we eat and drink the body and blood of the Lord, our minds are set on heavenly things, our thoughts are directed to the sacrifice of Christ, our faith in him is renewed, and our sins are forgiven.

Eating the food of our heavenly homeland, we celebrate the fact that we will one day live with God for all eternity and share in the feast that never ends.

So, let us walk according to those examples of citizens of Christ's kingdom. Let us stand firm to the end, anxiously awaiting the transformation of our bodies to be like his glorious body.

As heavenly citizens, we endure our time on earth and long for the day when our heavenly Father will take us home. As foreigners who live for news and mail and word from the country we love, we count down the days to set foot in the land that will always be home.

Amen