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"A Spiritual Home in the Real World"
Sermon Notes
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A spiritual home in the real world.

Underneath our logo, you'll find that expression. You'll find it on our cards, stationary, and in other places, as well.

A spiritual home in the real world.

I thought of that when I read Paul's letter to the Corinthians this morning. I thought about what he might have meant when he said

"we lament—longing to be clothed with our heavenly home"

I wondered if we understood what it mean when we audaciously first stated that we are a "spiritual home" in the real world and if that "boast," as Paul might have called it was more than a catch phrase.

Or does it really mean something.

Do we have a clear idea of what it means to say we are a

"spiritual home in the real world"

any more than Paul knew what it meant

to long to be clothed with heaven?

Is there a **difference** between this "spiritual home" in the real world and the "heavenly home" for which Paul longs?

None of us were there with Paul during his days; his writings have been edited and translated and edited and translated again.

Not all his letters have been found; in fact this letter we read today is thought to be at least two letters strung together. So, we are unsure of what it is Paul exactly had in mind. But I think we get the idea. That's the power of parables and examples.

From what we do have, we can say a few things. One is that a possible difference between Paul's heavenly home and our spiritual home

is measurement.

Paul's measurement was simple.

This earthly time is a passage to an eternal time.

Our measurement seems to be a little more complex; a little more into metrics; most likely rooted in the difference between the Ancient East and the Modern West cultures.

And while Paul simply and elegantly refers to heaven and eternal life as heavenly clothing;

we dig more deeply into spiritual home.

We count up the good works we do;
the peace and comfort we find;
the serenity and security we seek and are able to achieve in our
"spirituality."

We see this as a place to be clothed—not to long for clothing.

We seek this time, this spiritual home to be the permanent kingdom on earth, maybe secretly wishing that there will be no end, some how, some way, we will live into a spiritual transition that will eliminate all struggles, disappointments, conflicts.

If that is the spiritual home we seek here, we might want to reconsider. As Paul tells us, this is a time of longing for the heavenly home, not pulling the heavenly home down to us – now.

Paul has no question that eternal life is beyond this life (as life continues beyond this form). Paul can't wait to fully die into Christ and be freed into eternal life; we on the other hand try to prolong life as long as we can and often fear death to the point of ignoring its reality in our lives—as a passage to the greater glory that awaits us, death having been conquered for us by the resurrection of Jesus.

It is the difference between letting oneself go into the promise of God, Jesus, Spirit

and somehow trying to be home before we get there.

Such an approach blurs reality, spirit, and everything in between.

In these and many other ways, Paul was writing to the Corinthians, just as he might have written to us. He was telling them and us by extension – quit measuring and start living in the Spirit that safeguards you.

Ahh, but in this Western culture—we love to measure.

Even at Jan Hus. I, you perhaps, we most likely often describe the spiritual sense of who we are in the form of our missions and our history.

In many ways,

it is the practice of the gospel message in the history of Jan Hus that propels us into our future.

We raise up the early days of Vincent Pisek and the emerging Czech community;

we laud the provisions for community and worship they established in extremely difficult times;

the navigation of a new world and culture for the immigrants—

in much the same way that Jan Hus has navigated the new worlds of all the generations since:

- through opposition to wars and support for troops,
- while demanding peace;
- through movements to protect our environment,
- such as strong stands against nuclear armament and proliferation;
- and through great social changes in
- civil rights,
- woman's rights,
- LGBT rights,
- and determination to “do something” to help the folks who found themselves
 - homeless, marginalized, oppressed
 - while trying to change the conditions that produce such dehumanization of our sisters and brothers.

These are all things we believe in and “do” or have “done.”

But do they describe a “spiritual home”?

And, if so, how?

And what is the Spirit in which we move, and work, and mission?

Well, according to Paul, it is the Spirit in which all these things and more are known, the Spirit in which our very lives unfold—that same Spirit that safeguards us. Guards us in safety. He says it this way:

“While we are in this tent we lament—longing to be clothed with our heavenly home—because when we are dressed we will not be found naked. While we are in this tent we groan and find it a burden, because we don’t want to be naked, but to be clothed, so that what is mortal is swallowed up by life. God made us for this very purpose and gave us the pledge of the Spirit to safeguard our future.”

Some of what Paul says is hard to understand because it is Paul; but also because he is speaking not the human language of accumulation and explanation, but language of Spirit, a language that is best understood in the fullness of our heart—***the only place where the gaps in the words can complete the meaning of the message.***

It is not the head and thinking he is speaking about—rather he is in the Eastern view of the world that says the heart informs us; the heart receives all the input and stimuli and intuition and then through the heart we listen.

Not, as we do in Western culture raising everything to the level of the head, thinking, intelligence, emotion, enumeration, metrics, and so forth to achieve a solution or direction or even think we might be able to fully describe a spiritual home in the real world.

I posit that a spiritual home in the real world is a place of heart...and as soon as I go any further to describe it...I am back in my head, unless I constantly, intentionally redirect my expressions to you ***through the center of my heart.***

It’s the difference in a way between:

What’s in your wallet and what’s in your heart.

And, if you want to try a little exercise when you are by yourself or in a small group, ask yourself, or each other...what is in your heart?

And after a short while, if you are like me, you will begin to have trouble with the words...because after a while you will be attempting to describe that which cannot be described...the Spirit...God...Love...heart...

You will be attempting to describe that which holds the fullness of God and Love, your own inner spiritual home, and you will run out of words because the heart has its own language, a simple language, begun with the breath of God not words.

We need to breathe in God to complete the mystery—in ways we still will not understand.

Understand?

It really is easier to count up everything we've done to grade ourselves or others in our spiritual work and lives. But **talking** about all this is like describing a sunset through the shadows it causes; sort of like living in Plato's cave.

Plato's Cave, also known as the Analogy of the Cave or Parable of the Cave is a fictional discourse that takes place between Plato's brother Glaucon and Socrates. In it, Socrates begins by describing a scenario in which what people take to be real would in fact be an illusion.

He asks Glaucon to imagine a cave inhabited by prisoners who have been chained and held immobile since childhood: not only are their arms and legs held in place, but their heads are also fixed, compelled to gaze at a wall in front of them.

Behind the prisoners is an enormous fire, and between the fire and the prisoners is a raised walkway, along which people walk carrying things on their heads "including figures of men and animals made of wood, stone and other materials". The prisoners watch the shadows cast by the men, not knowing they are shadows.

There are also echoes off the wall from the noise produced from the walkway.

Socrates suggests the prisoners would take the shadows to be real things and the echoes to be real sounds, not just reflections of reality, since they are all they had ever seen or heard.

They would praise as clever, whoever could best guess which shadow would come next, as someone who understood the nature of the world, and the whole of their society would depend on the shadows on the wall.

Socrates then supposes that a prisoner is freed and permitted to stand up. If someone were to show him the things that had cast the shadows, he would not

recognize them for what they were and could not name them; he would believe the shadows on the wall to be more real than what he sees.

"Suppose further," Socrates says, "that the man was compelled to look at the fire: wouldn't he be struck blind and try to turn his gaze back toward the shadows, as toward what he can see clearly and hold to be real? What if someone forcibly dragged such a man upward, out of the cave: wouldn't the man be angry at the one doing this to him? And if dragged all the way out into the sunlight, wouldn't he be distressed and unable to see "even one of the things now said to be true," viz. the shadows on the wall (516a)?

After some time on the surface, however, the freed prisoner would acclimate. He would see more and more things around him, until he could look upon the Sun. He would understand that the Sun is the "source of the seasons and the years, and is the steward of all things in the visible place, and is in a certain way the cause of all those things he and his companions had been seeing"

Paul himself in his first letter to the Corinthians 13:12 says, "For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known." In many ways what we see are the shadows or representations

"it because we know "the fear (awesomeness) of God" that we try to persuade others." Do not look at anyone in terms of mere human judgment.

For anyone who is in Christ there is a new creation. The old order has passed away; now everything is new.

In other words, we are out of the cave. We still see the shadows but we also know the cause of the shadows. And we know that the first cause is much greater than anything we understand or can explain (as if First Cause explains anything about God). And that faith, though small as it may be, whether the size of a mustard seed or smaller, is powerful beyond all that we face.

We walk by faith, not by sight.

Later in the second letter to the Corinthians, Paul describes the hardships he has faced. In chapter 8:3 he says to the Corinthians:

We want you to know sisters and brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We underwent sever stress, well beyond our ability to cope, to the point of despairing of life itself. ***In our hearts we***

felt we were doomed, which taught us not to rely on ourselves but on God who raises the dead to life.

Our God is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of our God is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces reflect our God's glory, grow brighter and brighter as we are transformed into the image we reflect.

We walk by faith and not sight.

Perhaps that is what a spiritual home in the real works like when we walk.

We persuade others of the awesomeness of God and the life and resurrection of Jesus and more.

Perhaps that is what a spiritual home in the real world looks like when we talk.

We live into a longing for heavenly garments and we see our purpose here, in life, this life, this passage, as a place where we carry that message and learn from others as they reflect that message in their own lives.

Perhaps that is the home we have here when we gather. A real home of Spirit—all that it means, along with all that we don't understand.

A spiritual home in the real world is not measured by the ways of the "real world." The real world is just a shadow of what is to come. Seeking proof through the shadows leads us to the place where the shadows themselves take on the role of reality.

It may be that a spiritual home in the real world is a place of no shadows, just a growing reflection of God, God's Spirit, and the Risen Jesus in our lives. Living more deeply into faith in the life to come and not the limited vision of our own senses.

It seems, to me, that we are well on our way here...with a ways to go.

There is no way to be a spiritual home in the real world without the Spirit.

May we continue to find such a home, here, together.