

# WE LIVE IN AWE OF OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

## 1 Peter 1:17-25

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, Wisconsin

Easter 3 -- April 26, 2020

TRUE or FALSE: *Where I am FROM shapes HOW I live?* TRUE! And some of that shaping is quite harmless! Is it a bubbler or a drinking fountain? Soda? Pop? Or soda pop? "Yes, sir! Yes, ma'am!" with a tip of the hat? I love how *grits and greens* can polarize a room! It has a lot to do with where you're from.

But some things are NOT so harmless. MY experiences may have taught me to prejudge you--your skin color, your accent, your choice of clothing, even your faith! Where I am FROM may predispose me to be mean to YOU...but nice to you! I come from sinful parents, so part of me wants this life to be all about me! It's true! Where I am from shapes how I live.

THAT could make for an uncomfortable conversation even here among God's people...unless we recall what our big brother taught us. No, not the brother who insisted on having the TOP bunk, but the one who lowered himself to serve on Calvary's cross!

*Jesus' disciples came to him and he began to teach them. "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed--holy/precious--be your name--your Word among us--your kingdom come--rule in our hearts through faith--that your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* Wow! Are we catching that? Where I am FROM changes how I live, and by faith we are from heaven! Jesus taught us that. Peter picks up on that. We get to live it! **We Live In Awe of Our Father In Heaven.**

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### 1. Mindful of This Temporary Life

#### A. Some of Us Love to Camp

*"Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear."* Live this life as temporary residents who truly don't belong. You know, that sounds a little bit like camping!

"Whoa! Timeout!" some of us are thinking. "Houston, we have a problem! That 'reverent fear' thing? That's me! Where I am FROM is I am a sinner, just like my parents, and I am afraid of God! Can we discuss that first?"

Well, if that is where our hearts and minds are, then we are in a good place and our Savior is smiling! You see, not only did he TEACH us this life-changing truth that our Father is in heaven, he actually GAVE us the GIFT of that relationship! Peter says, *"You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed--bought back--from the empty way of life handed down by your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or spot. He was chosen before the creation of the world but revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God!"*

Jesus saw US as he hung on that cross, God's sacrificial lamb. HE was living where HE is from! Heaven says, *"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them."* Jesus reconciled us--brought us back to his Father through his payment for

sin! Good Friday was crucial. Easter Sunday is key! **If Jesus Has Risen...THEN** heaven is our home and THAT changes how we live! *“Foreigners here in reverent fear.”*

It’s as if Peter were saying that THIS LIFE IS BUT A CAMPING TRIP! Danger! Warning! Some of us LOVE to camp! Devil’s Lake. Kohler-Andre. Yellowstone National Park. Campfires. Ribs over the open flame! S’mores. Sunsets. Sunrise hikes. Sleeping in. A gentle rain on the tent in the middle of the night. This camping life can pull at us and cause us to forget about home. We like it here!

## **B. Our Father Keeps Us Focused on Home**

But Peter reminds us that this temporary life is *empty* in the end. Sin’s curse is real. The hopes and dreams—HOW I want live, how WELL I want live, WHERE I plan to retire—the hopes and dreams of this life will die with us—and maybe sooner than we’d planned! The dirt will hit the coffin...but through faith in Jesus our souls ARE safely checked into the Father’s house, lodging paid for by the precious blood of his Son!

So, our Father is determined to keep us focused on home lest we lose this gift from his Son. Our Father allows the winds of this life to flatten the tent with us still in it. He allows the downpours to soak the dreams of what could be. He creates a longing in us for the dry clothes of home, the warm bed, the solid roof, and even a hot breakfast at the nearby diner before we point the car in the direction of home!

Jesus coached Mary Magdalene on this temporary life. Think of what he said to her outside the empty tomb! She had grabbed hold of him, clinging to the Jesus she knew. But he said with love, *“Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and YOUR Father, to my God and your God.’”* Do you hear it? Our home is in heaven! God is our Father and what is permanent is what will be!

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**APPLICATION** If the pandemic had not happened, next weekend would have been Confirmation for our 8<sup>th</sup> graders and COVID-19 would NOT be part of our vocabulary. But our heavenly Father has determined that it is wise for our world that this pandemic rain on our parade. When we preach for confirmation, I believe we will be more zeroed in on the best message for these young believers to hear. I might have been tempted to lecture them on “camping well”, NOT grabbing hold of sin’s pleasures in this temporary life so that Judgment Day catches them by surprise. That message is important but we will most definitely have the heart of Jesus and remind them first and foremost of their status before our Father in heaven.

We are redeemed children of God bought with the precious blood of the Lamb. God is our Father. Heaven is our home. And THAT truth shapes how we live in this temporary world!

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## **2. Filled With Genuine Love**

### **A. Your First!**

Peter says, *“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth—faith in Jesus—so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”* The good news of God’s Word has given us eternal life in Jesus and THAT Peter adds changes how we love. Our love is genuine and from the heart! How is that so?

Well, if I have heaven, what more do I truly need? Paul says, *“Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it. But*

*if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.*” Heaven in my future makes it easier to pray for “daily bread” being content with God’s plan for me and NOT focusing on “getting my share.” Heaven in my future enables me to *“love my neighbor as myself”*, though I will always struggle with loving me first. “YOU first!” is who I want to be. Heaven in my future inspires me to *“love one another as Jesus has loved ME.”* How can I serve YOU today?

I can hold the door for you! I can turn the other cheek. I can risk your anger and talk to you about your sin. I can be humble and admit my sin against you and ask for forgiveness! I can give offerings to God and gifts to those in need. Heaven is my future! YOU first!

### **B. What Is Of God Lasts!**

*“All people are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall but the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.*

Where I am FROM shapes how I love, and Peter encourages us to love *mindfully*—aware that only what is of God lasts. Genuine love is a thinking thing! There are no ATMs in heaven—money does not last. So how do I use money now to God’s glory? My trophies will melt in the fire on the last day...so how do I achieve victories that impact eternal life? No one will truly remember my name after I am gone, but if I share the love of Jesus some will remember HIM! Lord, make my love a thinking thing! May it shape how I live since heaven is my home.

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**APPLICATION** How well are we loving in this pandemic? Is our love genuine and deep? “You FIRST” since only what is of God lasts? Personal questions for all of us. What about our St. Paul’s? Are we an amazing example of the Spirit’s words that, *“It is the word of the Lord that endures forever.”*

Not to be too morbid, but to drive through St. Paul’s in this pandemic--especially on cloudy days like we’ve been having--is to see NOT life, but “death”. Where is the life and the vibrancy? Where are the children? Where are the cars? Where are the Reading Buddies? Where are Pastor Kuehl’s jokes? Where is the laughter? It’s APRIL! We have a large sanctuary--a shell of emptiness. Two gymnasiums standing empty. The Trinity Café no longer lit. Classrooms and hallways where you can hear a pin drop! The world might say and we might think, “It is sad what has become of St. Paul’s!”

Until we remember what God’s Church is about! The glory of people withers. The “visual” of people falls. But the Word of the Lord and its impact on our living is what endures! St. Paul’s is preaching Jesus and salvation, daily! St. Paul’s is loving people daily! And last weekend we loved in a special way as we more than restocked what had been empty shelves at the Muskego Food Pantry and gifted them with \$1976! Who sees that love today? God does! Who sees that love today? Anyone visiting the pantry, though not knowing from where the love came! We are God’s people being God’s people! By God’s grace and his Word we are still St. Paul’s.

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**CONCLUSION** TRUE or FALSE: *Where we am FROM shapes how we live?* TRUE! *And that is the Word that was preached to you.* Amen.

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