

## “It’s Time For a New One”

Liturgical Date: Proper 6 (B)

Primary Text: 2 Corinthians 5:1-17

Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. The primary text for today, the Third Sunday after Pentecost, is the Epistle Lesson from 2 Corinthians 5. The title of the sermon is “It’s Time For a New One” AS IN CHRIST WE ARE NOT SIMPLY IMPROVED, BUT MADE NEW.

As we often see in the Bible, our text gives contrasts. Our current bodies with the glorified ones that awaits us in eternity. The struggles of a fallen world with the eternal heavenly glory. The old and the new. And it begins with contrasting two very different dwellings and expands upon that contrast throughout the passage: a tent and a building.

Probably most of you have slept in a tent at some point in your life, some maybe more than others. Some people love it, getting out in the “great outdoors” and gathering around a campfire. Others don’t and agree with the late journalist/southern humorist/philosopher Lewis Grizzard who said, *“America is probably the only civilized country in the world where people voluntarily leave their air conditioned homes to go sleep in a tent.”* In my younger days I actually slept in a tent on a regular basis as I was a boy scout and our troop went on camping trips about once a month. And these were not what they call today “glamping”, we pretty much roughed it-sleeping often in old army tents without floors, cooking our food over a fire, not having access to plumbing, etc. My family went camping some too, but not very often. We laugh about it today because it seemed like on every one of those rare family camping trips something would go wrong.

On one particular trip my father had purchased a new tent that he got a good deal on, I think it was from a flea market. That tent was big enough for him, mom, and my little sister. My brother and I slept in a smaller tent that was pitched a few yards from the larger one. Well, that night a huge summer storm rolled through the North Georgia Mountains. As we say in the South, “the bottom fell out” as the rain poured down. Lighting flashed and thunder boomed, large limbs crashed to the ground in the surrounding forest. And guess what? That new tent leaked. Bad. My parents and sister ended up eventually retreating to the car and staying in there the rest of the night. Now something you may not know about me is that I am a sound sleeper-I mean like a rock. You would not believe some of the things I have slept through. My mother said she could have strangled me in the morning when I emerged from my little tent, stretched, and said, “Mom, it looks wet. Did it rain last night?”

Even if you have a tent that does not leak, we understand that tents are designed for temporary lodging. This is the contrast St. Paul makes in our text from 2 Corinthians today. In verse 1 we get quite the contrast that will set the tone for what follows. A tent is contrasted with a building that is built by God. The tent represents our earthly bodies, which are temporary. The building from God is created by Him, not human hands, and will be our eternal dwelling. Our current “tents” are fallen and stained by the effects of sin. It takes some longer than others, but eventually these “tent bodies” begin to wear out. But as Christians we have our glorified bodies that we receive at the resurrection of the Last Day. These bodies are without sin, just as God created Adam and Eve. They will not wear out. They are built for eternity.

In my illustration, obviously my family had obtained a tent that defective from day one. But even the best tents will eventually wear out. My brother and I, our tent did not leak that night-but eventually it would have worn out. They will develop leaks, tears, pieces needed for set up will be lost. As it is with our earthly bodies. As verses 2 and 4 said, that while we are in this tent we “groan” and are “burdened.” Even people who seem to be the “picture of health” will eventually have some type of problem. I once listened to a life insurance sales pitch where the salesman said, “Hey, if you live long enough you are going to get cancer.” Not too encouraging, but he had a point. We could follow all the advice that the experts and doctors tell us to take care of our tents, but we can’t make them last forever. And it is not just physical: there will be challenges mentally, emotionally, in relationships. All of the painful and even deadly consequences of sin, our rebellion against God, are on full display.

All of these things can cause us to be what is sometimes called “being homesick for heaven.” In particularly challenging times, we are especially ready for Jesus to return or call us home. We know that this fallen and wicked world, despite the moments of joy and peace that God gives us even here, is not our eternal home. There is something better, much better, that awaits God’s children. And our text for today talks about this home. It says that when the time of death comes, we will be away (or absent as the KJV puts it) from this body, but home with the Lord. However, as verse 9 says wherever God has us, here in our tents or in God’s eternal building, we should aim to please Him. We need to be properly clothed, not naked. What are we clothed with? The righteous garment of salvation, which is none other than Christ. He graciously gives us this garment in our Baptism, by grace through faith. Times can be tough in the meantime. Trees may be

crashing to the ground around you, the rain might never seem to end, more leaks keep popping up in our tents-but trust in God. We know His promise is sure and true. As verse 7 said, *“We walk by faith, not by sight.”*

We desire to share the message of the Gospel with others as verse 11 tells us, we want them to believe it. Our world loves to look at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart (verse 12). That tent we bought looked really nice on the outside, but when the storms came it was proven to be defective at its core. The love of Christ compels us to share His message (verse 12). And what is that message? From verses 14-15, *“we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”* This is the Gospel. Jesus has died for all. Through Him our flawed earthly tents can be replaced.

And that brings us to the key point of contrast that culminates in the last verse of our Epistle reading today. You see, many of us are fixers. And many of us Lutheran folks especially are very practical and frugal. We try to get as much mileage out of a product as we can. I mean you are looking at a guy who has been known to wear an article of clothing for more than 20 years in some cases! Even when I do buy something new I often want to buy the same thing I had before! We may be hesitant to just toss something when it is broken. And there are certainly some admirable and beneficial qualities to that kind of attitude. However, it can be a problem too. Because sometimes the wise choice is that we need to pitch the old and get something new. The older I get, the more I learn this lesson.

Take that defective tent in my illustration for example. With the materials that modern tents are made from, fixing a tent with multiple leaks is nearly impossible. I am almost positive that tent was a one-use product

for us and got disposed of. It was flawed. It was time for a new one. We can do that with other things too. We may have a car we try to keep going- “hey its paid for!”, but with all the money we put into repairs, we could get something newer and more reliable. And there could be more examples, but the truth is sometimes we just have say, “It’s time for a new one.”

So read verse 17 again, “*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*” You see, we can’t take our sin-broken tents into eternity. We can’t just patch them up. We have to have a new one. Christianity is not a repair program. It is a replacement program. Christianity is not a self-help program, but a transformation of the self by God. Many people do look at the Christianity in flawed ways in that if they are not happy with aspects of their lives they may want to “try out this Jesus thing” to see if it will make them feel more happy or fulfilled. But this sells God short. He doesn’t just want to patch up the holes in your leaky tent, He wants to give you a whole new and better dwelling.

This is brought home with the words of verse 17. It is an out with the old and in with the new. It is not a “better” or “repaired” creation, but a new one. We must understand just how radical conversion to faith in Christ is. It is not just here, but proclaimed throughout the Scripture. Here the words of the prophet Ezekiel in 36:26, “*A new heart also I will give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.*” This is case when the heart is so badly damaged the cardiologist can’t just do some patch up, a transplant is needed. What did we hear in the Gospel text a couple of weeks ago when Jesus told Nicodemus what must happen to enter the kingdom of heaven? Jesus said, “ye must be born again.” Not starting acting this way, stop doing

this-no God wants to do something so radical in changing us that He calls it a new birth. St. Paul echoes this “new creation” or “new creature” language in Galatians as well when in the final chapter he says essentially, “*you don’t need a little skin lopped off as in circumcision, we need to be whole new creation in Jesus.*”

And St. Paul knew a little bit about this, didn’t he? Remember as Saul, he hated Jesus and those that loved the Christ. But that all changed when God got a hold of him. He even talks about this in verse 16 how prior to conversion how we (and he) viewed Jesus according to the flesh in times past. To Saul, Jesus was a simply a man-and one that he didn’t like at that. But to the now Apostle Paul he now knows Jesus is also God, the God who died for his sins, my sins, your sins, the sins of the whole world. This is a complete transformation. Our old nature can’t be improved. It has to die, to drown in the waters of Holy Baptism. It was time for a new one to emerge as a new creation-transformed into servants of the living God. The new has come. This is good news.

Yes, we still live in our tents for now, redeemed tents, but still tents. We still face temptations and trials as we await our time to enter our eternal home with our resurrected bodies-the building God has created. We look forward to this. We have, as verse 5 told us, the Holy Spirit as the guarantee-whom we have right now as we await the fulfillment of all things. We are new creations by the Spirit, water, and Word. In this we rejoice that the new has come-not just improvement, but the replacement of our sins with the righteousness of Jesus. In that we can sing, as we did in verse 3 of our Hymn of the Day, “*Create in me a new heart, Lord, That gladly I obey Your Word, Let what you will be my desire, And with new life my soul inspire.*” Amen.