

April 28th, 2024, Philippians 3:12 – 4:1 The Arrival

-Welcome

-There is a famous quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Life is a journey, not a destination."

There is truth in this quote, but I want to challenge it a little this morning, could it be that Life is a destination and there is a journey to arrive.

-Think about it for a moment, how many of us love fighting traffic to drive to the airport, finding parking, going through security, and doing all this in time to be at the gate for loading. And unless you fly first class how many get giddy to cram into a small seat for many hours and eat plain/plane food (If you are fortunate enough to get something to eat). Then there's the flight. There is a story...

An airline pilot had a rough flight and a worse landing, and the airline had a policy which required him to stand at the door while the passengers exited, smile, and give them a "Thanks for flying our airline." He said that but was having a hard time looking the passengers in the eye. Finally, everyone had gotten off except for a little old lady walking with a cane. She said, "Sir, do you mind if I ask you a question?" "Why, no, Ma'am," said the pilot. "What is it?" The little old lady asked, "Did we land, or were we shot down?"

-In all journeys there is a bit of sacrifice that is required to arrive at your destination. Why do we go through this... I would venture to say that it's the destination that helps you through the journey. It's the joy found in the arrival that keeps us moving forward in spite of difficulties.

-Some of you might be wondering about where we are headed so let's get started.

-Pray

-We continue in our series Captive Letters. We believe it is important to occasionally do what they call expository preaching, its where we examine scripture and allow it to create the theme rather than having a theme and finding scriptures to support it.

-All preaching should pay attention to content, the who, what, where and why of scripture so not to misinterpret. In our scripture today Paul is a prisoner, and he is writing to a church that he helped to start.

-Last week Dan preached on the first part of Philippians 3 where Paul warns the believers not to get caught up trying to earn salvation by following the law/rules. He could easily do it himself, but he concludes in...

Philippians 3: 7-9 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

-As he says in **Ephesians 2: 8-9** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.

-No one can earn salvation it is a gift that needs to be received. No amount of rules following will earn you salvation.

This leads us to our scripture for today.

-I have it broken down a bit but before we dig in deeper, we need to understand why Paul starts out saying that he hasn't arrived yet, but where is he headed? That is found in the previous two verses 10 and 11.

Philippians 3: 10-11 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

-He wants to know Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life – He wants to know the resurrection. That is what he wants to obtain to arrive at, but he recognizes that in order to be born a sacrifice is required. In order to experience this new life death is necessary – death to the old self and ways of living and thinking.

-This is a process, a journey towards a destination, and Paul's focus in our text today.

The Journey to Destination (VS 12-14) Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

-In verses 12 to 14 Paul presses forward to grasp all that Jesus has grasped him. The word 'take hold' can be translated to apprehend, to grasp completely, to seize, to possess.

-Jesus completely understands us/taken hold of us and the He welcomes us to know Him completely – Think of the passage where Jesus talks about being the Vine and we are His branches! And this is in spite of our past and our present failures. Jesus welcomes us to know Him.

-I want to pause on verse 13 for a brief moment, '*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead*'. This requires some careful thought because I believe Paul is specifically talking about his past of persecuting Christians and trying to destroy the church. It did no good for him to remain in the past – beating himself up. He repented and was forgiven.

-This is a big deal because think about it. He was at Stephen's death – Paul could not ask him for forgiveness. And there probably were people who lost property and land, plus some could still be in prison for Paul's persecution of the Church. Paul's statement all the more incredible that he was able to settle his past.

-All of us must reconcile our past, it cannot be ignored, it must be dealt with. It may require asking or giving forgiveness. And depending on what took place it may take time and perhaps demand counseling. Please reconcile your past...

-But when you are able to let go of the past, in your context, then you are free to follow...

Follow Along (Vs 15-17) All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained. ¹⁷ Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.

-That is what Paul does in the next section, he invites the Philippians to follow his and others as an example. I honestly wish I could say this, but I see so many weaknesses in my life that I would have trouble telling someone to use me as an example.

-Perhaps it is from growing up in a Mennonite church that promoted humility, maybe too much because many of us focus mostly on our failures and weaknesses... May God help us as Paul says in this passage 'to live up to what we already attained.'

-But even though we live correctly/set a good example that doesn't mean others will follow...

The Wrong Destination (Vs 18-19) For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.

-This section talks about the wrong destination. Verse 19 uses the word stomach, but many believe that to mean a persons appetite. Those who are consumed with the things of this world will become like those things they seek.

-Jesus said in **Matt. 6: 21-22, 33** 'But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' Seek God's Kingdom and Righteousness.

-If your focus is on Him then your citizenship is in heaven...

The Right Destination (Vs 20-21) But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

-Our ultimate destination is to be in the presence of the Lord and His children for time unending.

-It is important to remember this because the destination helps you through the journey.

-A word of caution: If we focus too much on the destination that we miss out on the process, the journey towards a destination... We might be dreaming about sitting on the beach/mountain and not concerned about our connecting flights.

-Balance is necessary in our journey. Our destination is not a place but a person, the personhood of God the Father, Christ the Son and Holy Spirit.

-In this section talks of a physical transformation which is necessary for us to enter heaven, but that transformation starts long before that moment. Remember Paul talked about it earlier in the chapter to experience the resurrection we also must death.

-Please know it is not a death to our personality, abilities or interests but death to our control over them for our own glory.

-Jesus talked about a new birth and a new direction.

John 3: 3 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.

Luke 9: 23 Then Jesus said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

-To be a Christian is to be on a journey. When we begin to understand this then the following statement becomes true to us.... **To die is to live and to submit is to be free!**

-Our new birth is salvation from believing that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. But daily submission is where we grow up. We are not meant to be infants forever, but in a spiritual sense we can be, and the sad thing is many of us stay there – never growing up in the Lord. Life is easier if we are not responsible for anything, and all of our needs are met.

-But think about all that we are missing out on if we never grow.

Philippians 3: 12-14 I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

-May we say the same thing – Let me strive until The Arrival – Whether that be Christ returning to earth or me joining Him in my final and permanent transformation.

~Invite Worship Team Forward~

This may sound scary, the journey that may prove difficult at times, but the Lord can be trusted there is a Goodness of God. He is faithful...

Benediction: The final verse of our scripture **Philippians 4: 1** Therefore (In light of everything we heard), my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!