

The Long March

Hebrews 11:10; Genesis 12:1-4

Sunday, September 19, 2021 at The First Congregational church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Intro. the journey of the people of God is a journey to heaven. Or maybe it is a journey through time to return to our home.

"When the world my heart is rending
With its heaviest storm of care,
My glad thoughts to heaven ascending,
Find a refuge from despair.
Faith's bright vision shall sustain me
Till life's pilgrimage is past;
Fears may vex and troubles pain me,
I shall reach my home at last."

- *Author: Charles Haddon Spurgeon* *

There's a committee in the church, under the authority of the Cabinet that will be asking as many as are willing to reflect a little bit about our church. The underlying principle is that the Holy Spirit speaks through many people, not just one or two and taking time to reflect together on this journey we call "life" is wise. To be honest, I think that notion that life is a journey is an image that has been overused, but it is valid just the same. Journeys don't always cover miles, sometimes they cover time. So even if we stay in one place, we travel a journey through time. The destination for our journey has been the same for people before us, including the great patriarch Abraham. There is a sense that they, and we are on a journey back home. Note the ancient passages that speak of our destiny as well as many before us.

- Abram receives a call from God to go to a land at God's direction.

In Genesis 12, God speaks with a member of a family that worshipped other gods, except this member. A man named Abram, who in some fashion hears from God and is told to say "goodbye" to all that he knows, and leave. He probably had some idea where he was going but did not know specifically the final location at first. He did not go alone, but went with spouse, family and entourage and ended up in what is now Israel. There he lived as a foreigner and as a pilgrim for the rest of his life, trusting God that he was in the promised land. But the Book of Hebrews points out that Abram (later Abraham) knew that the promised land that was Israel was just the beginning. His final destination was the city that was made by God, the New Jerusalem, or heaven. Jesus the Christ opened the opportunity for this journey to anyone and everyone who would follow Him and so this journey is not just Abram's, but that of millions, including us. It is a journey home, or perhaps we could call it a journey back home.

- We had a home made by God but we lost it. Cf. Genesis 2: 4-7

This is why I say that life is like a journey back home, because we had one once and lost it. In Genesis 2 there is what is called a "secondary creation account." It is espoused by people who interpret the first two chapters of the Bible as having two conflicting accounts of creation, as if the author of the work (traditionally it is Moses) could not make up his mind. But the word for "earth" in verse 6 means "land" and it can be land of any size, such as all the land of the planet, or an entire continent, a country, or even a plot of land or a

garden. I think these passages describe the Garden of Eden, humanity's original home. Though expanded since then, I suspect that the Garden is now part of heaven, which was Abram's ultimate goal all along, as it is ours now.

- Abram came to understand that the land was the city made by God

Hebrews 11:10 makes a wonderful comment on Abram's call of faith when it points out that even Abram ultimately understood that his final goal was not the land to which he traveled and lived as a sojourner for many years, but heaven, humanity's original home, now offered again through Jesus Christ. Our lives are a long march through time to the same goal as that great patriarch of old, and we march together and would do well to converse together and help each other along as much as possible.

Sometimes reflecting together helps us made the most of this journey.

"She referred to "home," but it wasn't a place she referred to; it was Jamie, and Louie, and her sister, and even her brother, and the rest of the Europa show people. I guessed maybe that was the key--to figure out who your home was and find a way to keep them with you." -

*Author: J.J. Howard**

- Application

affirm

As far as application is concerned, know that the Lord affirms you in your journey through the years that is the long march toward heaven. Verse 16 says that God is not ashamed to be our God, and the God of all who make this journey in Christ. We are on a good path, and we can help each other on the way.

questions and discussion on Zoom

With the idea that discussion about our journey will help us help each other on the journey, I'd like to offer a few questions that are part of our renewal process and, if you're willing, discuss them with you on a zoom meeting. Simply let me know during fellowship hour, or send me an email, or call the church office and I'll gather everyone together on Zoom and we'll talk. If for some reason you can't meet on Zoom we, meet on person. If that doesn't work, we can talk on the phone. Here's some questions that I would like to leave for your consideration

- 1 What do you think the church has to offer that no other human institution can offer?
2. Do you think of your life as a journey? Why or why not?
3. How does the journey become richer if we help each other along the way?

I look forward to hearing from you. Next week is Rally Sunday and then the Sunday after that we spend some more time with Abram's journey.

* <https://quotestats.com/topic/find-your-way-home-sayings/>