

“You Are God’s Tabernacle”

2 Corinthians 4:13-5:5

Earlier in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, he reminds us that we are but jars of clay—feeble, temporary, very breakable containers, yet in us is contained the most valuable treasure: the Gospel; “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ,” as Paul says (2 Cor. 4:6).

In today’s Epistle lesson St. Paul stays with the same theme but uses different imagery. The VBS kids should pick up on this right away. Our earthly life is like a tent built by human hands. Like a tent, or as we learned – sometimes called a tabernacle, our bodies are just a temporary dwelling place. The life we live and all the things that we spend so much time struggling to obtain or achieve; these things will all pass away. The earthly home of our body is like a tent. Only when God calls us to our eternal home in heaven will we have anything that will last or have any permanence.

Paul continues to use imagery in drawing distinctions between earth and heaven; sin and grace; death and life. In our

sinful temporary existence, we long to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.

When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, after they had sinned; what did they do? They hid from God because they were ashamed of their nakedness. The guilt and shame of Adam and Eve's disobedience to God was revealed to them in the shame of their nakedness. Because of their sin, they could no longer stand before God or each other in the way that God had intended in the beginning. Their sin caused them to feel naked and exposed. Guilt overwhelmed them. They needed to be clothed. So God wove for them clothing of fig leaves to cover them.

But God offered them much more than just fig leaves. The promise given them is the promise of a Savior. Satan would be defeated. Sin and guilt would be covered.

If we try to make it through this life without Christ who has taken away the guilt of our sin, on the Last Day, we will stand before God stripped naked with all of our guilt and shame completely exposed. But something about you has changed. As we heard last week, you have been "born again." Tomorrow morning/ this morning Jordyn will be/ has been born again. What a great day this is in God's family. As God's adopted children through Baptism, you have the sure promise that so long as you

remain in your Baptismal faith, you will always be clothed in Christ's righteousness.

The clothing you wear that covers your sin, that covers your shame and nakedness before God, is the righteousness of Christ. You might say that it is your permanent baptismal garment that God has given to you. It is the only appropriate clothing to wear in the presence of God, and it is far more comfortable and covers far more completely than the fig leaf clothing of Adam and Eve.

This is why Scripture says that when we appear before the judgment seat of Christ we will receive our reward according to what we have done while in our earthly bodies, either good or bad. We confessed that last week in the Athanasian Creed. We all sin and fall short of what God demands. We are all worthy of the wrath of God as we appear before that judgment seat. And for those who do not live by faith, they will receive what is due them for the things done while in the body.

But for God's faithful, being clothed in that garment of righteousness, God only sees the good you have done. The bad is forgiven and is remembered no more.

As Paul says, you are but jars of clay: feeble, temporary, easily breakable, yet in you is contained this most valuable treasure. In you is the Word of God – the joy of salvation in the

Gospel. In you is the Holy Spirit Himself. He has made you His dwelling place. You are His tabernacle. I mentioned that to the VBS kids this past week and some of them thought that was the funniest thing. They laughed every time Caleb the Camel said “tabernacle.”

You carry this most precious treasure with you as we dwell in this earthly tent. And it is this treasure that ensures that when this earthly tent is destroyed, God will bring you to your permanent heavenly home. Of this you can be completely confident – your guilt and shame has been washed away the water of Baptism and you will remain clothed in Christ’s righteousness within God’s church on earth, and before the judgment seat, and for all eternity in the heavenly dwelling.

Sin and guilt have been covered by Christ. We do not desire to hide like Adam and Eve. In our Baptism, in our life of faith, and in our life to come, we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Amen.