

Title: Journey To Forever

Text: Genesis 13:15

Date: June 5, 2011 (Graduation Sunday)

Place: Decatur Church of God

Theme: Packed Bags

Our theme, Packed Bags, really fits for some of our graduates this morning. Having graduated from High School they are prepared and packed for mission trips and college. And even our college graduate is preparing for the next step in her life's journey.

Where will I go? Where will life take me?

Often these are questions that we all ask ourselves.

Romans 6:14

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Because we have Jesus Christ as our master, we receive His grace that affects our lifestyle now and forever. Remember the verse from last week...

Hebrews 10:14

Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

No guarantees!

Since I have come to be your pastor I have seen a number of our congregation and our families take the journey from this life to the next.

Why? What is the determining factor or factors? I do not know.

Whether it's Clarence Stapleton, Verlyn Geyer, Caleb Van Valkenburg, Greg Baily, Betty Stiener, Fayma Geyer, or Ida Roudebush, I can't explain the reasons or the timing. But I do know this: God wants us to plan and then experience eternity with Him.

God has a reason for words like “forever”, “eternal”, and “everlasting.”

* We understand these words. They or words like them are used everyday in reference to products that we use.

- Plastic bowls that we put our food in will last forever.
- Styrofoam that we throw away, that goes into a landfill will last forever.
- That material that they made your couch out of is everlasting.
- And don't forget that piece of pizza you left in the refrigerator last month. We think it is eternal...at least the fuzzy stuff on the outside.

I. We use words that have a “forever” meaning.

- A. That doesn't mean that we believe it is forever.
- B. Look at the law, which was given through Moses as an everlasting covenant, but then we see it replaced by the “law of Christ,” according to the New Testament.

Romans 6:14

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

*The Sabbath (Saturday) also was given as an everlasting observance; and yet, would any person deny that after the resurrection the apostles instituted Sunday as the day of worship?

- a. If physical circumcision can be replaced by spiritual circumcision...

- b. If the Sabbath can be changed by the resurrection of Christ...
- c. If the law can be superseded by a greater law of Christ...
- d. All this without denying that the old ones were eternal promises...
- e. Then why can't we permit Christ to work out the plan of God for his people, which now is the church?

Ephes. 1:22-23

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

* Our current understanding of salvation and our role as the church causes us to see our eternal destiny. In other words, forever.

II. Our journey affects that conclusion.

- A. A rejection of Christ does not change the forever but does change the relationship and the destination.
 - a. Separated from Christ, we will not enjoy the rewards of Paradise or eternity in Heaven.
 - b. Forever instead becomes an eternal punishment.

* What that means is high school or college graduation, weddings, births, job advancements and civic awards are wonderful experiences during the journey of life. They, however, are unable to guarantee more than a few hours, days or years of pleasure. There is no eternity in our life events.

Our journey must mean more!

- B. We make the choice.
 - a. We decide to accept or deny Christ.
 - b. To fail to make a decision is a decision.

* Imagine that you are jumping out of an airplane wearing a parachute. As you fall, you begin to think about when you should pull the ripcord. The air you feel rushing against your body is exhilarating. The scenery is awesome as you get closer and closer to the earth. Still, you are not sure of that moment, just the right moment for pulling the cord.

Then “splat!” The result of your decision is upon you.

C. The best decision is a decision for Christ.

* Albert Pujols, the first baseman for the St. Louis Cardinals, is a World Series champ, an eight-time All Star, the recipient of three National League MVP awards, and according to a 2008 poll of 30 MLB managers, the most feared hitter in the sport. But even more impressive is his life off the field. The Pujols Family Foundation he started offers support and care to people with Down syndrome and their families, while also helping the poor in the Dominican Republic. He and his wife of ten years provide a loving household for four little children. But most importantly, he is a passionate disciple of Christ.

While speaking at an event at Lafayette Senior High School in Missouri, Pujols told the audience of men and young boys, "As a Christian, I am called to live a holy life. My standard for living is set by God, not by the world. I am responsible for growing and sharing the gospel." Then, after reading Paul's words in ***Philippians 2:3***—"*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves*"—Pujols told the crowd, "One way for me to stay satisfied in Jesus is for me to stay humble. Humility is getting on your knees and staying in God's will—what he wants for me, not what the world wants." He added: "It would be easy to go out and do whatever I want, but those things only satisfy the flesh for a moment. Jesus satisfies my soul forever."

III. So, what do you plan to do with your life?

- A. Of course there are career implications?
 - a. Where do you want to live?

- b. Where do you want to work?
 - c. What kind of work do you want to do?
- B. Life is more than a career. How will you participate in your community?
- a. Volunteer organizations.
 - b. Financial donations and gifts.
 - c. Working with children's groups.
 - d. Assisting the elderly.
- C. I am especially concerned with the spiritual decisions you may be making right now.
- a. Have you acknowledged your need for God?

Isaiah 53:6

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

- b. Do you realize what a failure to make a decision for Christ will cost?

Romans 6:23a

For the wages of sin is death...

- c. Do you realize what a success a decision for Christ will bring?

Romans 6:23b

...The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 3:16b

...Whoever believes in him (Jesus) shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 6:37b

... Whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

John 1:12

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--

- d. Have you made the decision to accept Christ as your Savior and Lord?

Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Acts 2:38a

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..."

Romans 10:13

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Romans 10:9

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Conclusion: The journey to forever begins right now. You can make the decision that connects you with God or you can not make the decision for Christ, which is a decision not to accept Him.

Will your journey take you forever with God or will your journey take you to a forever without Him?