

## The Second Sunday in Lent

### Text: Philippians 3:17-21

<sup>17</sup>Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. <sup>18</sup>For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup>Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. <sup>20</sup>But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>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.

### Theme: *How Are You Walking?*

In our Sunday morning Bible Class we just finished studying Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Paul often speaks of our Christian life as a walk to heaven in that letter. For instance in 4:1 he writes, *"I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling you have been called."* In Eph. 4:17 he writes, *"You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds."* In 5:1 he writes, *"Be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us..."* In 5:17 he writes, *"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise..."*

The entire Bible uses this image of asking how we will walk in life. Will we walk with the Lord or will we walk in the way of sinners? For instance Proverbs 4:14 and 18 say, *"Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it...But the path of the righteous is like the love of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day."*

Paul uses the same imagery in these verses. Today I would like to look at how we are walking.

#### I. Many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Paul is encouraging us not to follow the example of such people. He writes two things about these people.

1. Their glory is in their shame. They love to do things, which God specifically prohibits in the 10 Commandments. Paul describes some of these sins in Ephesians 5:3 where he writes, *"Sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you."* These enemies of the cross of Christ claim to be Christians, but say that the Bible is out of date when it condemns things that they like to do. They openly engage in gross sin. The whole world knows that they are doing these things, but they don't care. They are not going to let anyone or even God's Word tell them how they should live. They want to do what feels good. They flagrantly break the 10 Commandments.

That is a big temptation for us today. We are constantly told that no one should tell us how we should live our lives. We should do what feels right for us, even if it is against the 10 Commandments. But when we live that way, we are dishonoring the name of Christ. In this case, we pray "Hallowed be Thy name," and lead us not into temptation," but God's name is shamed by the way that we live, and we willingly bring ourselves into situations that are full of temptations.

2. Their god is their stomach. This is when we make the things of this world our gods. Money, possessions, the things of this world, even good things like health become our treasure. Again this is a big temptation for us today. People will say, "If you have your health, you have everything." One day however, we will all lose our health. Will that mean that we will have nothing? We accumulate so many things, but eventually they wear out, rust or the technology gets old very fast. It is tempting to love our money, but eventually we will die, and it will all go to someone else. Sports can even become a god. All of our energy is sometimes placed in the sports that we or our children play or the ones that we watch. When sports is our god, the glory days will one day be behind us. Even if our team wins the championship, they are only champions for a few months. If we are the best player, eventually someone better will come along. When our joy, hope and peace are in the things of this world, we will find that in the end they all disappoint us.

Paul writes that the end of those who walk in this way is destruction. He doesn't mince any words here. He writes, *"Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame."* The things that they boasted of in this life will end up destroying them. They will be treated as God's enemies. He will send them from His glory for all eternity. This is a serious warning for us. If we claim to be among God's people, but we live for this life's sinful pleasures and the riches of this world, the love of those things will destroy us for all of eternity.

II. That is why our eyes should be on those who walk in Christ.

Think of someone you know who was a great example of faith. Hebrews 13:7 says, *"Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith."* Most of us can think of someone who is a great example of faith.

Such people had a firm faith in Christ. They didn't boast in their good deeds. They were the first to admit that they were sinners. Earlier in this chapter Paul writes that he counted all of his righteous deeds as rubbish. These people boasted in Christ. They trusted in His forgiveness. Our Lord's Supper was so important to them. It was the place where our Savior reminded them that He gave His body and shed His blood for the forgiveness of their sins.

As Christians we sing, "Jesus, Thy Blood and righteousness, My beauty are my glorious dress." We boast in the cross of Christ. He gives us a treasure which was won with His own precious blood, shed on the cross for us. It was while we were still sinners that He gave His life for us. He died for us, rose for us, and claimed us as His own in Holy Baptism. Our treasure is that we are His, and He is ours, and nothing can ever separate us from His love.

These people also sought to live holy lives. They were not perfect, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, they wanted to walk through life as Jesus did. Paul describes these deeds in Ephesians 4:2 where he writes, *"[Walk] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of people."* Think of someone that you know who has exhibited these qualities and strive to follow their example. When we walk in love, as Christ and His people have throughout the centuries, we are walking with Christ as His people.

The goal to which this path leads is the resurrection with Christ. Paul writes, *"Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to*

*be like His glorious body...*” Our eyes are always on the goal. We know that the sinful pleasures of this world will destroy us; the things of this world will break; our bodies will wear out; and our money will go to someone else, but Christ has won an eternal prize for us. That prize is the resurrection of our bodies. Today many people think that the separation of our bodies from the soul at death is the last thing that will happen. The body is laid to rest in the ground, and the soul goes to our Lord in heaven. But we await the day when the bodies that we have laid to rest will rise again. We confess, “I believe in the resurrection of the body.” Christ’s resurrection from the dead assures us that those who trust in Him will also be raised. We will have bodies like His glorious body. They will have no more defects or pain or sin. They will be glorious. We will run and not grow weary. Both body and soul we will be with the Lord for all of eternity. That is the goal that we as Christians are walking toward when we walk with Jesus.

In today’s Gospel lesson Jesus cried out, “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!*” Christ is calling us come to Him and follow Him. It grieves Him when we run away to our destruction. On the other hand, there is nothing that gives Him greater joy, than when we walk with Him through this world, even bearing our crosses, until He gives us the crown of everlasting life with Him. May His Spirit give each of us that faith, that we will walk with Jesus and His people to the glory of heaven.

Amen.

***Pastor Don Hougard  
Benediction Lutheran Church  
Milwaukee, WI  
February 28, 2010***