

I Am A Stranger and Pilgrim (part 2)

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Date: 27 January 2019

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[0 : 00] Gospel of Luke, we'll be reading from chapter 12. Luke 12, we will start at verse 13.

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

Jesus replied, Man, who appointed me a judge or arbiter between you?

Then he said to them, Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

And he told them this parable. The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, What shall I do?

I have no place to store my crops. Then he said, This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones.

[1 : 08] And there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, You have plenty of good things laid up for many years.

Take life easy. Eat, drink, and be merry. But God, But God said to him, You fool, this very night your life will be demanded from you.

Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself, But is not rich toward God.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, Therefore, I tell you, Do not worry about your life, What you will eat, Or about your body, What you will wear.

Life is more than food, And the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens. They do not sow or reap. They have no storeroom or barn, Yet God feeds them.

[2 : 18] And how much more valuable you are than birds. Who of you, by worrying, Can add a single hour to his life?

Since you cannot do this very little thing, Why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin, Yet I tell you, Not even Solomon, In all his splendor, Was dressed like one of these.

If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, Which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, How much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith?

And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink. Do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things. And your father knows that you need them.

But seek his kingdom, And these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, For your father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

[3 : 32] Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, A treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, Where no thief comes near, And no moth destroys.

For where your treasure is, There will your heart be also. Well, we are in a series studying our identity in Christ, And presently our identity in Christ as a stranger and pilgrim in the world.

And that means that this world is not our home. We're journeying through it as a strange land where we don't belong. As we're making our way to our homeland where we do belong.

And we've seen that three times in his first letter, The Apostle Peter tells us that this is indeed who we are. We are sojourners here. We are pilgrims and strangers. And then he calls on us to live like it.

To live like a pilgrim while we're alive on this world. So we're asking, What does the life of a stranger and pilgrim look like in this world?

[4 : 48] We've seen two things so far. First of all, It is a holy life set apart from the world unto God. It's a separated life from the worldliness that's surrounding us.

And it's marked by an abstaining from fleshly desires. That we find right within us. That war against our soul. That's the way the world lives.

We must abstain from those fleshly desires. And the motivation and the fuel for this holy life is the reverent fear of God.

Wherein we esteem him higher than anything else. Ourselves included. Now the more we live this holy life, The more out of step we will be in this world.

And therefore, The more it will be seen that we don't belong here. And so secondly, We saw that to live as strangers and pilgrims in the world is to expect persecution and ridicule from the world.

[5 : 49] After all, It is the same world that crucified our Lord. So we come today to a third mark. Living as strangers and pilgrims means knowing our best things are at home.

And being willing to wait for them. John Bunyan has this as an important lesson that Christian needed to learn early on in his pilgrimage.

Through this life. And he learned it at Interpreter's House. You be sure to pick up your copy of Pilgrim's Progress. I'm going to read a bit from it. The interpreter took Christian into a little room where two little children were seated, each in his own chair.

The name of the older was Passion and the name of the other, Patience. Obviously, Passion was not at all content, while Patience was very quiet. Why is Passion so discontented, asked Christian? Well, their governess wants them to wait for their best things until next year, said Interpreter. But Passion wants all his best things now, while Patience is willing to wait.

[7 : 00] Then one came to Passion and poured out at his feet a bag of treasures, which he quickly gathered into his arms with great joy. He laughed loudly and made fun of Patience.

But soon he wasted everything he had received and had nothing left but an empty bag. Explain this matter more fully, said Christian.

Well, Passion represents men of this world. And Patience represents those who are of the next world. Men of this world must have all their rewards in this life.

They cannot wait for the next world. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. It means more to them than all the promises in the Bible about the world to come.

So they soon go through all they have, and at the end of life, they have nothing. Now I see, said Christian, that Patience has the better wisdom for many reasons.

[8 : 01] First, because he waits for the best things. And secondly, because he will enjoy the glory of his rewards when the other has nothing but rags. Yes, and you may add, this also said interpreter, the glory of the next world will never pass away or wear out.

But the glories of this life are soon gone. Therefore, it is said of a certain rich man, Christian says, Then I judge that it is best not to covet things that are now, but to wait for things to come.

You speak the truth, said interpreter, for the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are unseen are eternal. Yet present things are so close to our fleshly appetites and eternal things so far out of sight that men are apt to seek the present things and to neglect the eternal.

Now as pilgrims going home through this world, we find that most of the people around us are living for this world and not the next. And that means they simply seek the pleasures and treasures of earth to the neglect of heaven, superior and eternal treasures and pleasures.

They seek ease and rest here and now rather than that coming eternal rest of heaven. And all of that creates a real temptation to us who are pilgrims to just forget who we are and where we're going and to fit in with the world around us.

[9 : 55] Some of you work on the road. You travel at your job and you find yourselves away from home maybe for a week at a time. How does that go?

Well, you stay at a hotel and you eat at restaurants. The kids think you're living the good life but you know better. There's no place like home and there's no cooking like mom's.

So if your hotel is really nice and has all the amenities, well, that's all good and well, isn't it? But if it's not, it's really no big deal. You're just there for a few days and you'll be going home again.

If it's clean and has the necessities, a decent bed and a shower, you can wait to get home for all the other things. I've stayed in some pretty nasty hotels and motels in my journey and I'd never want to live there but it's okay.

I know what's waiting for me at home. And that makes a difference in how I travel. Same with the food. Some is better than others but again, it's no big deal. You'll soon be home eating what's best and it's prepared just the way you like it.

[11 : 10] So your identity as a traveler, going home, helps you put up with some of the inconveniences along the way, knowing you'll soon be home where everything is best.

Now, brothers and sisters, our identity as pilgrims helps us then put up with some of the inconveniences and troubles and hardships of this life. It even enables us to endure great pain and suffering along the journey because we know it's just for a little while and then we'll be going home forever and there is just no place like our heavenly home.

Our Savior is there. The one who took the nails and the wrath of God for us. The one we've talked to all of our lives.

The one we've just sung to and about. The one we love but we've never yet seen him. and we believe in him though we do not see him now.

He's there. To be away from him is to be away from home. We prefer to be at home, Paul says.

[12 : 36] He's there and eternal pleasures are there at his right hand. Fullness of joy unmixed with any sorrow where gladness and joy will overtake us and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Unimaginable ecstasies that never perish, spoil, or fade. Exciting surprise after exciting surprise.

Never weary of it. Never fading in our hearts. Unfading delights. Our loved ones in Christ are there.

Our inheritance is there.

Our reward is there. Our treasure is there. Better and lasting possessions. And since our treasure is there, our hearts are already there as well.

So if heaven has my heart then I can sit loose to the things of this world. I can sit loose to the things that the world's running after all around me on my journey home.

[13 : 39] I can enjoy God's gifts and enjoy God in them but I don't have to have them. I'm going home which is better by far. So much better than life on the road traveling through this world of woe.

And with a home like that we can afford to put up with some hard things along the way. I was reading in Genesis where Joseph's down in Egypt there's grain to be had there.

His brothers and his father are starving back in Canaan. You remember the story and how they eventually Pharaoh finds out that that Joseph's brothers have come and he says okay go get them and move them here to Egypt their new home.

And Pharaoh told his brothers take some carts from Egypt for your children and your wives and get your father and come never mind about your belongings because the best of all Egypt will be yours. And that's what God's saying to us. You all come on up and make your home with me and never mind all your belongings because the best of heaven will be yours.

[14 : 55] Do you see how my heavenly home is to affect my earthly journey? Now what would happen Mr. Businessman if as you're traveling away from home one morning you woke up and you forgot about your home?

You start treating your room there at Motel 6 as if it were your home. And you say I've got it made here I've got a nice bed I've got a warm shower a nice TV internet connection and there's a restaurant just across the parking lot and they even leave the light on for me in the evenings and you start to live as if that is your home.

Something's seriously wrong with this picture isn't it? Treating a Motel 6 as if it were home treating any hotel as if it were your home.

and even so something is seriously wrong with us strangers and pilgrims when we forget about our heavenly home we fall prey to that constant pull of the world to find our home here to settle down live for this earth its toys and joys.

That's a pilgrim with amnesia whose heart is no longer in heaven and is in serious danger of giving up the journey altogether. That's the repeated warning in the book of Hebrews.

[16 : 23] So let those who have no home in heaven with nothing better to look forward to in this life let them make this world their home and grab all that their eyes can get from this life but let every homebound citizen of heaven never forget where we're going.

how out of place for us to set our minds then on earthly things things that would attract us and distract us from the better things the better country of heaven.

Well how do we do this? How do we maintain a pilgrim status and identity and how do we keep it before us? Well let's wake up every morning this week and just wake up to the identity I'm a stranger and pilgrim here.

I'm on my way to heaven and you head out the door or go wherever you go if it's into the kitchen and the washroom and the kids room wherever you go you just go as a stranger and pilgrim keep

that identity before you.

Each day another leg of the journey setting our sights on heaven where we're soon to be forever with the Lord that's what he won for us by his obedience and his blood let's not despise his gift and treat it with contempt as if it's no big deal and therefore forget it.

[17 : 50] So I ask myself as I challenge you to ask yourself am I treating this world as home or as a strange place that is on my way home?

There's a huge difference isn't there? Does my life clearly communicate to onlookers around me that I am bound for the promised land? Does it plainly declare that I seek a better country a heavenly one that I can't feel at home in this world anymore not with Jesus there and me here? Or does my grip on the things of this earth and their grip on me tell a different story that in fact this is my home and I have no other promised land?

The Old Testament history of Israel stands on the pages of scripture to typify among other things to typify spiritual realities of the people of God living in the new covenant so we read about Israel and what we see there often typifies what's true of me as a pilgrim and stranger so for instance in Deuteronomy 6 23 Moses says the Lord brought us out to bring us in he brought us out of slavery in Egypt to bring us into the promised land but between these two events was 40 years in the wilderness and that 40 years was a time of testing it was a place of trial and temptation temptation and in the same way between your being converted and brought out of slavery to sin and being brought into heaven there is a wilderness that you must make pilgrimage through it's your whole life now what's left of it before you reach heaven and it too is a journey filled with trials tests of faith temptations to sin now that connection you see between our journey and Israel's journey through the wilderness that connection is made clear in first

Corinthians and especially in Hebrews the book of Hebrews makes that connection for us and what did the Israelites find they found that journeying through this wilderness the desert could be even more difficult and dangerous than serving as slaves in Egypt they didn't do so well did they on the journey just read this morning Deuteronomy 9 Moses has to say from God's perspective from the day I knew you you've been rebellious stubborn going your own way that's what characterized the journey what was the problem they forgot where they were going among other things the land flowing with milk and honey and so their troubles became too heavy for them and they grew impatient along the way and instead of looking ahead where they were going and considering the journey worth it they looked back and they hankered after the food they had back in

[21 : 17] Egypt and they complained and murmured about the present hardships in the wilderness they'd lost sight of the promised land of the destination salvation I just finished reading through the account of their journey and I counted eight times that they fell into murmuring over the troubles along the way it was a perennial problem of Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness there's a lesson there for us folks here they were going to a land flowing with milk and honey with houses and vineyards and orchards and lands that their hands had not worked for just to be laid in their lap and they went murmuring all the way judging by God's punishment on them for it he takes murmuring far more seriously than what we might think this sin is he sent fiery snakes to bite and kill them he sent destroying fire to consume them he sent a destructive plague to kill some of them he had the ground open up and swallow them alive something that had never happened before this murmuring complaining spirit what is it about murmuring that is so offensive to God well it it slanders his goodness he's good we ought to be praising and thanking rather than murmuring and complaining it makes nothing out of the promised land to which he is bringing us treats it with contempt as if it's not even worth these trials to get there well there were hardships along the way for

Israel to be sure but it was after all on the way to a promised land and that should have silenced their murmuring now our journey heavenward is no less full of troubles and Jesus assures us that's the way it will be in this world you will have tribulation you will have trouble pecks of it you can't escape it Paul said the same we must go through many hardships on the way to entering the kingdom of God so how are you handling the hardships and troubles and disappointments of life are you seeing them as just the journey to the promised land and is the promised land at the end of the journey so bright and cheering that it withers any murmuring!

He didn't know that he has been living at my house for the last five six months but I have been living much with John Newton and one day he went to visit Mrs.

G just after she had lost all her fortune I couldn't be surprised that I found her in tears he said but she told me I suppose you think I'm crying for my loss I was but that's not I'm now weeping to think that I should have felt so upset over this loss and Newton says after that I never heard her speak again on the subject as long as she lived and that is just as it should be end quote because in Christ she had better and lasting possessions awaiting her in heaven and that's why we should find the Christian content in plenty or in want why we should not be deeply moved as travelers and pilgrims either by the increase or the decrease of things here because our best things are at home in heaven and we're willing to wait for them and then

Newton gives an illustration that I have found to be so helpful to me and we got to remember if we would understand the illustration that he lived back in the horse and buggy days of the 1750s in England suppose a man was going to York to take possession of an inheritance of a large estate a mansion miles and miles of land and money more than he could spend in a lifetime and just a mile before he got to the city his carriage broke down which forced him to walk the rest of the way what a fool we should think him if we saw him wringing his hands and blubbering out all the remaining mile my carriage is broken my carriage is broken excuse me where are you going sir to York but my carriage is broken and what's your business there to receive a large estate as an inheritance but my carriage is broken how pathetic is that but brothers and sisters are we not on our way to an inheritance as co-heirs with

[26 : 54] Jesus Christ and mansions did he not tell us he's preparing a mansion for us that's reserved in heaven for us and land did he not say that the meek would inherit the whole earth and wealth we heard it this morning in Sunday school the incomparable riches of God's grace waiting for us is what we are going to receive at the end of our journey not worth putting up with some hardship along the way to it this is not the end Luther would say this is not the end it's the way and will not the joys that await us there more than make up for any troubles to get there Samuel Rutherford knew great hardship and knew imprisonments and he wrote it were a well spent journey those seven deaths lay between it would be worth going down into that dreadful valley of the shadow of death seven times just to get to

Emmanuel's land where the lamb is all the glory oh Christ he is the fountain the deep sweet well of love the streams on earth I've tasted more deep I'll drink above there to an ocean fullness his mercy doth expand and glory glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land worth seven deaths to get there the apostle Paul he faced a few hardships along the journey didn't he you can read it in his Corinthian letters the list of his hardships you know what he said and remember this is the man who whether in the body or apart from it he wasn't quite sure but he went into the third heaven and he saw things there that were unutterable and heard things there that he was not permitted to speak of do you know what he says he says in

Romans 8 18 I've put it in the balance all my suffering and I consider I reckon it this way that our present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory that shall be revealed in us it's not even worth putting in the scales the things I saw the things I heard put it completely into irrelevance the sufferings of this life for our light and momentary trials that's what he called them however heavy and however long they're light and momentary compared to what he saw our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all 2 Corinthians 4 17 so two minutes in heaven will more than compensate a lifetime of sorrows on the way there we sing it it will be worth it all when we see Jesus life's trials will seem so small when we see

Christ one glimpse of his dear face all sorrow will erase so bravely run the race bravely pilgrim on till we see Christ the certain hope of heaven and what we will enjoy there is to leave its sweetening effect upon every inconvenience every hardship every pain every trouble on the way home we're going home and what a reception awaits us there last week I was listening to some Negro spirituals is what we used to call them a whole genre of music that grew out of the suffering and painful experience of slavery and we could learn from them for as they suffered they sang and they sang a whole lot about heaven and a whole lot about Jesus for relief along their suffering journey they looked to the sufferings of the

Lord Jesus Christ you see how they done my Lord you see how they done my Lord but he never said a mumbling word not a word not a word he never said a mumbling word well they nailed him to a tree yes they nailed him to a tree but he never said a mumbling word not a word not a word he never said a mumbling word see what's going through their minds as they're being mistreated and suffering my Savior not a mumbling word falsely accused spit upon whipped beaten mocked nailed

to a tree and he never said a mumbling word and

[32 : 39] Peter says to strangers and pilgrims making our way home that this Savior left us an example left you an example that you should follow in his steps who was as a sheep before her shears is dumb so he opened not his mouth not so much as a mumbling word none of this my carriage is broken my spouse is gone I'm all alone my money is wearing out my health is leaving me my carriage is broken and all the while heaven is just around the bend just around the bend if ever there was a people who should do everything without complaining it's us heaven bound pilgrims but we forget where we're going and we start to settle in think of the sorrows our Lord faced on his journey home why is even on the journey that's a good place to start well he's come from heaven on this journey for us poor sinners whose home is hell for what we've done in offending

God and he's come from heaven to bring us sinners on our way to our eternal home in heaven to his home in heaven and the Bible says in bringing many sons to glory it was only fitting that God should make the author of our salvation perfect through suffering suffering it would be by suffering that he brings many sons home to glory so he had to pass through the wilderness didn't he of testing and temptation he had to suffer when he was being tempted he had to go through the fires of judgment the curse and wrath of God as as he stood in for us and he bore the suffering and death that we would have suffered for eternity yes he he suffered and he never said a mumbling word but rather for the joy set before him endured the cross scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of God in heaven what enabled him to endure the cross to treat its shame with contempt as nothing worthy even of consideration well it was the joy of seeing you everlastingly happy in his home bringing you home to glory and seeing you there happy with him so just as Jesus had his eyes fixed on the joy that was set before him we now are to fix our joy our eyes our eyes on

Jesus and the joy that is awaiting us when we come to see him and live with him psalm 84 5 to 7 perhaps we'll come back to it at another time it's such a rich passage it just says this blessed are those whose strength is in you oh lord who have set their hearts on pilgrimage and they go from strength to strength till each arrives before God in Zion they've set their hearts on pilgrimage don't settle set don't settle for this is your home but set your heart on pilgrimage to that real home he's bringing us all the way home to heaven believers and he's using trials and pain and suffering as his sheepdogs to get us there till going from strength to strength each appears before God and Zion not one missing glory and glory story asks in her song blessings what if trials of this life what if its disappointments and its sorrows and pain are sent to remind us that this is not this is not our home well then

God would be doing us a wonderful favor wouldn't he and who of us doesn't need many such reminders that this is not our home this world is so appealing to our flesh that it would be ruinous to our souls to journey through this world without troubles that are meant to wean us from it if we met no sorrows on our way we would be even more prone than we are to give up the journey and settle down and be forgetful of that better land but disappointments sorrows pains remind us that this is not our home afflictions pull off the mask of this world and it reveals its fallenness its vanity its emptiness its curse in its present state that for all of its promises this world has only broken cisterns that cannot hold water cannot truly satisfy the deepest longings of our soul and then we see clearly that this cannot be our home

Tony Renke writing on our need for trials here in this life says! rust and moth and robbers eliminate our securities when cancer arrives or when we find ourselves speechless in the company of a suffering friend then we feel deep in our bones that this world cannot be the eternal rest our hearts long for when life is easy we start to unpack our bags and make a nice home for ourselves here in this world sometimes in the wisdom of God the house that is blocking our view of Christ will be burned to the ground and our loss is gain because then we see more clearly that our real treasures and our real pleasures are not here in this world but in Christ and in the heaven that he is bringing us to where he is so Newton says happy for us if we've suffered enough to make us desire a better country how much suffering does it take just enough to make us desire a better country a heavenly one so let us adore the grace that seeks to draw our hearts above you see

[39 : 33] God's up to something good isn't he in our trials he's teaching us that our best life is in heaven and he's making us willing to wait for it he's curing us from settling for a motel six when he's preparing a mansion for us don't build your nest I can't remember if it was Rutherford that said don't build your nest in any of these trees below because the whole forest is destined for fire but in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth the home of

righteousness so the journey may feel long but it does not wind on forever weary pilgrim this journey has a destination has an end do you know many are arriving there every day we got to hear of two of them on Golgotha when

Jesus said to the thief beside him today you with me in paradise we're a week closer than we were last week and that should sweeten every step of our journey at last the march shall end the wearied one shall rest the pilgrims find their father's house Jerusalem the blessed then on ye pure in heart rejoice give thanks and sing your glorious banner wave on high the cross of Christ your king rejoice give thanks and sing let's stand and sing as our march to heaven we'll keep it as an upbeat tempo as we're making our way heaven and this is meant to encourage us by remembering what's at the end number 502 stand with me 502 if you want to march in place you're sure allowed to do that but let's have our hearts set on pilgrimage even as we sing let's pray our father thank you for speaking words words that we find with double edged sword to cut and convict us and then to heal and encourage us it is right only right that we should be marching our way to heaven with the banner of Christ and his cross before us it was by his cross that we even got up on this highway of holiness and are headed to this glorious destination you've taken us off of that broad road that leads to destruction and you've transplanted us on to that narrow road that leads to life so we give you thanks Lord Jesus for what you've accomplished by your life and your obedience and your death and resurrection your present reign for us we thank you for your word that we find to be a word of encouragement to send us on our way rejoicing giving thanks pardon us for our sin our sins of murmuring and complaining and stop those murmurs right in our lips in the midst of it to remind us that heaven is just around the bend and all that you've promised us will soon be ours help us to honor you with our faith and with a life that would vindicate and prove and adorn the truths of the gospel we ask in

Jesus name amen amen! oh oh oh oh