

A Better Country

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[0 : 00] Well, last week began with a day of action as we went to the polls on Monday to cast our votes. And the next day, Tuesday, we found ourselves settling into the reality of what the majority of our fellow Canadians in each riding had decided.

And for many of us, the result was quite disappointing. We all have a deep longing in our hearts for a country where righteousness and goodness and justice and peace reign.

And yet we need to ask ourselves, even if the leader most of us wanted to win had won, could he bring that about in Canada? Or was he just better than the other guy?

Moments like these stir up a deep desire within us for a greater country. And what I want to do this morning in our time in the Word is to remind us that we who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, we have a greater country to which we belong.

And so this morning's sermon is going to be a little different. We're going to meander through a few different passages of Scripture which remind us of the great and certain hope that we have.

[1 : 30] This week I was reminded of Abraham. By faith, Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

By faith, he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.

For he was looking forward to the city with foundations whose architect and builder is God.

And by faith, even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise.

And so from this one man, and he is good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

[2 : 49] All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised.

They only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.

If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country, a heavenly one.

Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. This is from the New Testament book of Hebrews.

And the author there points us back to the story of Abraham to encourage us. His main goal is to illustrate what true faith looks like.

[3 : 58] And so he points us back to Abraham's life. There in Canaan, Abraham pitched his tents, trusting the promise that God would give him that land someday as his inheritance.

And by the end of his life, he owned little more than a burial plot in Canaan. God also promised that he would be the father of a great nation through his son Isaac.

And yet Abraham barely lived to see Isaac's two sons enter their teenage years. The words that struck me the most here came in verse 13.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised. They only saw them and welcomed them from a distance.

Admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. What is he saying here? He seems to be saying that Abraham continued to trust the promise of God right up until the day that he died.

[5 : 12] Even though he had not yet come to possess the land of Canaan, which was promised. In other words, Abraham died believing that God would still yet give him the land.

Even though at the time of his death, he owned almost none of it. We might wonder, how does that make any sense? Well, the author of Hebrews gives us a clue.

There was something in Abraham's faith which looked beyond the present state of things. There was something in Abraham's faith which hoped beyond the mere stuff of earth and the way things were in his day.

In faith, he reasoned that there would be a future day in which God would make good on his promise. And if not before Abraham died, then after in the resurrection.

There would be a future day in which God would give him a country of his own. A place to live where he wasn't a foreigner and a stranger.

[6 : 25] A better country than the one that he was tenting in. A heavenly country. Verse 16.

They were longing for a better country. A heavenly one. I wonder if Abraham's thoughts and feelings resonate with you. Do you look around at our world?

And at our country? Do you see what the majority of Canadians in each riding valued and decided? And do you feel like Abraham did? Like a foreigner.

And stranger. Living in a country. But not the country that we long for. I want to encourage you this morning.

Take heart. There is a better country. And it's not the United States of America. There is a heavenly country which God is preparing for all who have faith in him.

[7 : 33] Like Abraham did. And it's a place which actually feels like home. Not like this world where we live now.

I was reminded also of what the Apostle Paul said to the church in Philippi. In Philippians chapter 3 he writes this.

As I have often told you before. And now tell you again. Even with tears. Many. Live as enemies. Of the cross of Christ.

Their destiny. Is destruction. Their God. Is their stomach. And their glory. Is in their shame.

Their mind. Is set on earthly things. But our citizenship. Is in heaven. And we eagerly await a savior from there.

[8 : 32] The Lord Jesus Christ. 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. We may be discouraged with the state of our world. When we look at the news. When we hear the results of elections.

When we discover just who there is to choose. Between on the ballot. But Paul puts things in perspective for us. Many. Live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Many. Are on the path of destruction. Many. Many. Many. Celebrate. And pride themselves. In what is shameful. Many.

Have their minds set. On the stuff. Of earth. The things of earth. God reminds us here. That if we love the cross of Christ. We're in the minority.

[9 : 39] Many. The majority of people in our world. Are against. What we love. What we value. They are driven. By their gut desires.

Living only to please themselves. Caught up entirely. In the stuff of earth. But the good news. Is that we.

Belong. To heaven. But our citizenship is in heaven. I love this statement. Paul reminds us that we. Jesus people.

Do indeed. Belong. To that heavenly country. We have a share in it. Citizenship. It's our home.

Which means that this world. As it is. Is not. Our lasting home. Canada. As it is. Is not. To be. Our ultimate. Home.

[10 : 37] And native land. We have been born from above. Of God's spirit. And now we belong. To his country. Our citizenship.

Is in heaven. Where he is. And I love how Paul describes. Our hope. Related to that. In verse. 20. He says.

Our citizenship. Is in heaven. And we eagerly. Await a savior. From there. The Lord. Jesus Christ. 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. Is so much good news. In those words. Speaking of heaven.

Paul says. We eagerly. Await a savior. From there. One of the things. That caught my attention. With this statement. This week. Is how Paul. Could have said it. He could have said.

[11 : 37] Our citizenship. Is in heaven. And we eagerly. Await our arrival. There. When we all. Get to heaven. What a day. Of rejoicing. That will be. But no.

That's not quite. Where Paul. Wants us to fix. Our hope. Not just on a place. But on the person. Who is coming. From that place. To us.

And we eagerly. Await. A savior. From there. What are we to anticipate. Eagerly. Not just getting to heaven.

But the one. Who is from heaven. Coming to us. We eagerly. Await. Him. And who is he.

Paul uses a number of words. Titles really. To describe him. He is the savior. A savior. The one who has delivered us. From our sins. And from our guilt. And someday.

[12 : 34] The one who will deliver us. From all of our troubles. Forever. He is our savior. He is our lord. Our great master. The one.

To rule over us. He is. The Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ. To put that word Christ. In terms we understand. He is the Lord Jesus.

God's specially chosen king. For his people. We eagerly await him. This heavenly country.

Of which we are citizens. Is a monarchy. And Jesus. Is the king. And Paul reminds us here. Of just how powerful. King Jesus is.

And of one of the wonderful things. That he. Is going to do. With that power. He says. He will transform. Our lowly bodies. So that they will be like. His glorious body.

[13 : 33] This I believe. Is another way of describing. The great resurrection. That Jesus. Has promised. To those who believe in him. It's not just. Bringing us back to life.

It's God's will that we yearn for the kingdom of Christ to come here on earth. He told us to pray for it. And this truth of the kingdom is all over the Bible.

[18 : 04] Another place we find it described is in Colossians chapter 1. Paul's praying for the church there in Colossae and he says, giving joyful thanks to the father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the son he loves in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

I love that passage. It's the kingdom of light. It's the kingdom of the son. And the good news of God to all the world is that even though all of us have rebelled against him and broken his commands, all who come to Jesus and repent and believe in him may be qualified to share in this inheritance as well.

Citizenship in this coming kingdom. The kingdom of light. This is our hope as followers of Jesus. We have become children of God and we are set to inherit along with Abraham the heavenly country.

It will be the home and native land that we long for. It will be the place where we will rejoice and be glad forever.

[19 : 38] Life in that place will be a delight and a joy at all times. We're promised by God that the sound of weeping and crying will never be heard there.

Never again will we see the tragedy and pain and loss and death we see so often here and now. I'm just taking some of this from Isaiah 65.

It says, we will build houses and live in them. We will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. God says, we will long enjoy the work of our hands. It'll be a place of unending peace.

no more conflicts no more arguments no more fighting no more war. Not even the animals will do harm to one another said God through the prophet Isaiah.

God will live among us and we will live with him like never before. There will be no more sadness no more pain and this glorious kingdom this heavenly country this new earth will last forever.

[20 : 48] this is what we long for. This is what we're looking for and it's not going to come about by earthly political reform.

Try as we may. It's not going to come about by an earthly leader. We are awaiting our savior Jesus our king to come and make it happen just as he promised.

He alone has the power to do this. to subdue all the nations and rule with righteousness and justice.

And so he is our hope as Christians in Canada. The results of the election this past week brought bad news but we still have a good news of a better country and a better leader.

that we can rejoice in that and we can share that joy and that news with others. This morning we want to take the last few minutes of our service here just to look back at the cross.

[21 : 58] All this talk of a coming king who will rule the nations might sound frightening to some. Usually that sort of talk relates to empires and kingdoms of the past which were led by wicked and cruel men.

But this is where Jesus our king stands apart. He is not only all powerful but he is truly good. So good that there is no evil in him at all.

He is the kind of king who would come down from his heavenly throne and suffer and die in our place to save us. That's what the cross is all about.

It's about love. Deep love. Powerful love by which a king rescued guilty rebels like you and me.

his will be a kingdom marked by pure and perfect justice and that would exclude us because we've all sinned.

[23 : 08] We've all broken his holy law but he has loved us so much that he did what was needed to atone for our sins and put us back on the right side of justice so that we can be with him.

Let me just point you back to that word Paul used earlier in Colossians chapter 1. God has qualified you qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light and so we want to remember the qualifying work of Jesus that got us this heavenly citizenship.

We want to remember this morning how Jesus offered his own body and blood up to death on the cross for us.

We do this by eating bread by drinking of the fruit of the vine just as Jesus did with his first disciples the night before he died and so we're going to take a moment to just reflect quietly and to pray and if you believe in Jesus as your savior and king then I want to invite you to remember with us and partake with us if not please just let the elements pass you by we'll have a few minutes of quiet now to reflect on what Jesus has done for us at the cross and then once everyone has been served I'll lead us in partaking together in remembrance