

There are a variety of ways to start a sermon. You can read a parallel passage to get people thinking about the topic of the day. You can tell a biblical story or a personal story that gets everyone focused on the topic. One of my homiletics teachers used to say, “Tell em what you’re going to tell em. Tell em. Then tell em what you told em”. Or, I could make a bold statement that is so unexpected that you would want to hear me defend my proposition. Let's go with that option this morning.

Here is my proposition: “We don't belong here anymore”.

You may agree with that statement. Or you may disagree with the statement. But the degree to which you agree or disagree, will effect on the way that you live your life.

To begin, we have to go back to the beginning – the day you were born. Each of us entered the world as slaves of sin. By birth we became citizens of a kingdom of darkness.

Ephesians 2:1,2 *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*

Living Stream Ministries.... “Satan’s kingdom is the sphere of Satan’s reign. The Lord Jesus once called Satan “the prince of the world” (John 14:30). This reveals that Satan not only has his kingdom, but also reigns in his kingdom. Moreover, within his kingdom are his messengers of various ranks, all of which were angels who followed Satan in rebelling against God. Today these are the principalities, powers, rulers, dominions, and spiritual hosts of wickedness of the air, Satan being their head

Everyone is born into this kingdom. It is an evil kingdom. It is a dark kingdom. It is a kingdom built on lies.

1 John 5:19 *We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

If you are a Christian, the day that you surrendered your life to Jesus, something miraculous happened.

Colossians 1: 13 *For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

If we now belong to the kingdom of God’s beloved Son, Jesus, then this earth, the “domain of darkness” is no longer where we belong. Our citizenship has changed. Our loyalty has changed. Our focus and our priorities have changed.

This morning, I will share several reasons why we no longer belong here.

Peter begins his first epistle with this statement....

1 Peter 1:1 - *To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying*

work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

Peter tells all the believers scattered across what is today the country of Turkey, “You don’t belong here!” You are aliens.

What is an alien? The NAS Concordance says the best translation is “someone who sojourns in a strange place”. Other translations render the word as follows;

NIV – exiles	MEV – refugees
KJV – strangers	ASV – sojourners
KJV – pilgrims (Hebrews 11:13)	

These words remind me of an old, old hymn.... This World is Not My Home
Arr by Albert E Brumley

Verse 1:

This world is not my home, I'm just a passing thru,
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue;
The angels beckon me from Heaven's open door,
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

Chorus:

O Lord, you know I have no friend like you,
If Heaven's not my home, then Lord what will I do?
The angels beckon me from Heaven's open door,
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

From Albert Barnes' Notes on the Whole Bible

“A pilgrim, properly, is one who travels to a distance from his own country to visit a holy place, or to pay his devotion to some holy object; then a traveler, a wanderer. The meaning here is, that Christians have no permanent home on earth; their citizenship is not here; they are mere sojourners, and they are passing on to their eternal home in the heavens. They should, therefore, act as become such persons; as sojourners and travelers do. “

Peter makes a clear statement. He refers to the recipients of his letter as “aliens”. But he does not give an explanation. So, this morning, we’ll look at verses in 1 Peter & 2 Peter. And in an attempt to be thorough, we will look at other passages.

We do not belong here anymore because...

1. We have been granted new citizenship (Ephesians 2:15-20)

I apologize for including a long passage. I think it is helpful to see verse 19 in its context.

Ephesians 2: 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

Paul was a Jew. But he is also the apostle to the Gentiles. Up until Calvary, these 2 groups were divided. Paul reminds the Ephesians that, “you used to be far away”. They did not know the Law. They did not share in the covenants and promises of the Old Testament. They were hopelessly lost in their pagan beliefs.

But, now through the Gospel, they share God's salvation with the Jews. They are “no longer strangers – no longer aliens (pilgrims- sojourners). They are “fellow citizens with the saints and are of the household of God”. Through Calvary, God breaks down the barrier between Jew and Gentile and makes “one new man”. Both groups are reconciled to God through the Cross.

Paul wrote similar words to the Philippians....

Philippians 3:20 ²⁰ *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;*

What does it look like when God makes 2 competing groups or 2 hostile groups into “one new man”?

Joyce & I arrived in Spain in September, 1982. In April of that year, Britain and Argentina waged war over the Falkland Islands (if you lived in Argentina you called them, Las Malvinas).

After arriving in Spain, we were invited to the home of a British family. They had also invited a missionary family from Argentina. While the adults chatted and prepared the meal, the children from England and the children from Argentina played “war” - hiding behind couches and chairs, they pointed their fingers, and made the sounds of guns. It was a not a laughing matter.

The 2 families came from countries that had been at war. Yet, there were no hard feelings. There was no resentment. We were missionary families sent to preach the Gospel to a needy country. There was a cause greater than national pride. There was a higher loyalty. We all owed allegiance to a greater Kingdom and the Lord of all.

We don't belong here anymore because...

2. New Family

A. A Father

This is hard for some to imagine. Some, because of circumstances, cannot imagine a loving, heavenly Father. Their father may have been abusive. Their father may have been an alcoholic. Others, their father may have died in an accident or in war. Or, their father may have simply abandoned the family.

Now, contrast that with my granddaughter. A while back, one of our granddaughters spent a night with us on a sleep-over. When her Daddy pulled into the driveway the next morning to pick her up, she squealed with delight. She was so excited because her Daddy had come to take her home.

That is the image we should have when we try to imagine a loving, heavenly Father who wants us to come home.

1 Peter 5:10 ¹⁰ *After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.*

None of us would be saved if God had not intervened in our lives. Jesus makes this clear in John 6:44.

John 6:44 *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*

This has been God's desire from the beginning. God desires fellowship with us.

Genesis 3:8 *They (Adam and Eve) heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.*

God created man for fellowship. Sin brought separation.

But, God still desired to be among His people.

- God instructed Israel to assemble a Tabernacle in the wilderness. Israel wandered like sheep and worshipped false gods.

- Solomon built the Temple. The leaders turned worship into a list of rules instead of encouraging a relationship. By the time Jesus came on the scene, it was a place of corruption and abuse.

But, God still wanted to dwell with his people.

John 1:14 ¹⁴ *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

Strong's Greek Concordance - "dwelt" = Short **Definition:** I dwell as in a tent, encamp, **Definition:** I dwell as in a tent, encamp, have my tabernacle.

- Jesus came as the Incarnate Son. God came in flesh and tabernacled among us and they crucified Him.

God still desires to dwell with His creation.

We should be thrilled when we think of heaven. Do you know who is looking forward to that day more than you? God!

Revelation 21:1-3 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,*

We don’t belong here anymore because

B. We have new brothers and sisters – The Family of God

I am very fortunate. Or, you could say that I have been very blessed. I grew up on a simple farm in western Pennsylvania. The most we ever travelled was 90 minutes twice a year to visit Grampy George and Grammy Mabel. Things have changed a lot. I have now been in 47 states and 11 foreign countries.

One of the greatest joys I have known is to meet and fellowship with brothers in sisters in Christ from other cultures.

A few years back I attended an international conference here in the States. 3 of us travelled together. All 3 are Caucasian. The majority of the attendees were Caucasian. But, it was an international conference.

No sooner had I arrived than I met a brother in Christ from Peru. We began to talk. Soon we met a brother in Christ from India. Without even thinking, I spent the entire 3 days of the conference with those 2 brothers – meals, sessions, and free time. I felt comfortable. I enjoyed the experience.

When we got home, one of those who made the trip from here made a big deal about it to Joyce. “You should have seen Garth. We got there. He took off with these guys from India and Peru...” It seemed natural to me. I enjoy other cultures and meeting people from other cultures. Apparently, that makes other people uncomfortable.

If meeting people from other cultures makes you uncomfortable, I have a word of advice—Get use to it! That’s what heaven is going to look like.

Revelation 7:9 ⁹ *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;*

Sometimes, when I drive home after work, I deal with the crazies on Paseo del Norte by listening to Tony Evans. I like him. He is enthusiastic. He doesn’t preach fluff.

Pastor Evans brought up something I had never thought about. I always understood that there will be many languages in heaven. You look at Revelation 7:9 and you have no choice but conclude that we maintain our language in heaven.

Brother Evans also proposed that we will maintain our ethnicity in heaven. I thought it over. To me, now, it makes sense. When God raises and glorifies our bodies, we will look like we do now.

John is given a vision of heaven. In the vision he sees a huge gathering of people. He knows that they are speaking every language on the earth. How? He can hear them. How does he know their ethnicity? How does he know that there are people from every nation, tribe, and people? He can see them. Those gathered to praise Jesus could be identified by their speech and by their appearance.

The Greek word for nations is “ethnos”. It is translated “nation”. It may not be the best translation. The word “ethnos” refers to ethnic groups.

If you go all the way back to Abraham, God promised him, “...and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed”. (Genesis 12:3)

Let’s use Spain as an example. If you understand “ethnos” as “nations”, then you would assume that there will be Spaniards in heaven.

But, that is not what “ethnos” represents. Yes, there will be Spaniards in heaven. But, from Spain, there will be individuals from distinct people groups.

There will be believers from Galacia in heaven speaking Gallego.
 There will be believers from Cataluña in heaven speaking Catalán.
 There will be believers from northern Spain – the Basque country – speaking Euskadi.
 There will be believers from the eastern coast near Valencia speaking valenciano.
 There will be gypsies.... and so on.

Choose any country of the world. Brasil, China. Choose a continent... Africa or South America. In heaven, there will be representatives from every people group on the face of the earth gathered around the throne. That’s our new family.

We don’t belong here anymore because...

3. We have a new home

Why didn’t Abraham build a city?

Genesis 4:17 *Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son.*

Cain built a city. That would be something - to build a city and name it after your son. Richard could – build a city and call it Jacobville or Calebburgh.

Abraham was wealthy. Abraham had a son. Why didn't Abraham build Isaactown?

Hebrews 11:8-10 *⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

According to Hebrews, Abraham made a well-thought out decision. First, he willingly lived as an alien. Even though he lived in the land that God promised to give to him, he lived as if he lived in a "foreign land". He didn't build a city. He purposed to live in tents, because he and his family were heirs of a promise. One day they would live in a special city. Abraham was looking for a city whose architect and builder is God.

Abraham knew that he did not belong here. He didn't make himself too comfortable.

I want to go back to the article written by Albert Barnes. He writes....

"We make the most rapid progress in our journey to our final home when we are least encumbered with the things of this world.

They (pilgrims) should not: (a) regard the earth as their home. (b) seek to acquire permanent possessions here... (c) allow any such attachments to be formed, or arrangements to be made, as to impede their journey to their final home, (d) encumber ourselves with much of this world's goods.

Abraham was not the only one with this frame of mind. Speaking of the Heroes of the Faith, the writer of Hebrews said....

Hebrews 11:13-16 *¹³ All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. ¹⁵ And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.*

We aren't the first to look for heaven. When I began, maybe you thought- "Garth, you're losing it." If I am losing it, I am not the first to do so.

Abraham knew he didn't belong here. He knew that he was a pilgrim passing through. He was focused on heaven. What about us?

Jesus said.....

John 14:1-3 *¹ Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*

Canyon Bible Church has a doctrinal statement. If you are a member, you affirmed that you believe that God created the heavens, the earth, all that is in them and man in 6 days. On the seventh day He rested.

Sometimes I am asked to pray for members of the congregation who are going to travel. My prayer is almost always the same. “Lord – open their eyes to see the wonders of Your creation, and help them Father, to the know the wonder of who You are”. We see God in the creation.

God created everything that exists in 7 days. There are so many incredible things to see as we travel the globe. Creation is marvelous.

Now consider John 14:1-3 again. How long ago did Jesus say those words?

God created everything in 6 days. If creation is marvelous, what will heaven look like? Jesus has been working on heaven for almost 2000 years!

1 Corinthians 2:9 ⁹ *but just as it is written, “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

A pilgrim should be thinking about going home. But, it looks like, maybe, we’re stuck here for a little while longer. So what do we do as we look forward to heaven?

We don’t belong here anymore. So we should

4. Live by new priorities

Pastor Bill touched on this verse last week...

Philippians 1:21-25 ²¹ *For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.* ²² *But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.* ²³ *But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;* ²⁴ *yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.* ²⁵ *Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith,*

While we wait....

A. We are called to minister

2 Cor 12:2,3 ² *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven.* ³ *And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—⁴ was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.*

I find these words interesting. If you check out a chronological time frame for the books of the New Testament, you will find that Paul probably wrote 2 Corinthians around 57AD.

He probably wrote his letter to the Philippians around 62-63AD. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he had already seen a glimpse of heaven. It had been 5 – or maybe 6 years, plus another 14 years since he had this celestial experience. And yet, he still tells the Philippians, “Even though heaven is glorious – even though I really want to go there - I’ll hang around a little while longer here on earth to help you guys out”.

Every believer can minister to others. Every believer is called to minister to others. So, while we wait we can all be touching the lives of other people and sharing the Gospel.

While we wait....

B. We Live by a higher standard

1 Peter 1:13 ¹³ *Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, ¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;*

Does anyone have a problem with those expectations? The work of the Holy Spirit in us is called sanctification. The goal is to imitate the life of Christ. Has anyone achieved the goal?

Peter gives us the reason why God calls us to holiness.

1 Peter 1:16 ¹⁶ *because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*

Peter has more to say about our lifestyle....

1 Peter 2:11,12 *Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. ¹² Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

1 Peter 1:17 *If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth;*

I could go into a long dissertation about how we are supposed to live. We know how we are supposed to live. Did you ever think of what it will be like in heaven? Apparently, I have.

One day we will achieve the goal of absolute holiness. One day we will close our eyes in this life. When we open our eyes on the other side, in the presence of Jesus, and everything will be transformed. In death, this fallen and corrupted prison of flesh will be cast off. Our spirits will be free and we will never feel the effects of sin again.

While we wait we are...

C. Called To invest in the future

Matthew 6:19-21 ¹⁹ *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Peter also encourages his readers to look forward.

1 Peter 1:3,4 ³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,*

Right now, we can't begin to imagine all that is waiting for us in heaven. We should be focused on heaven. We should be investing in heaven. How? How do we lay up treasure in heaven? By taking every opportunity to:

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| 1. Be obedient | 7. Support the Church |
| 2. Be humble | 8. Serve the Church |
| 3. Be a servant | 9. Support the work of missions |
| 4. Be a witness | 10. Pray |
| 5. Be faithful | 11. Encourage other believers |
| 6. Be generous | 12. Minister to the needy |

Philippians 3:20 ²⁰ *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;*

The word for “eagerly” is interesting because it has the prefix “apo”. Apo intensifies. So we are not just eagerly waiting for Jesus. We are supposed to really, really eagerly wait for our Lord to come so that we can be with Him forever.

Is this your hope? If you are a believer it should be. We don't belong here. For anyone listening who is not a believer, the answer is Jesus.

Recognize that you are a sinner. Ask for forgiveness. Believe that Jesus died for your sin and rose from the grave to give you new life. By faith, accept God's gift of eternal life. From this moment, live as a child of God. Fellowship with other believers is important. If we can help you here at Canyon Bible Church, look us up on the web and contact one of the names and phone numbers listed.