Philippians 3:20-21 20But our citizenship is in heaven. We are eagerly waiting for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. 21By the power that enables him to subject all things to himself, he will transform our humble bodies to be like his glorious body.

I have to tell you that sometimes it is just so hard to determine what it is that you want to say in a sermon. Now I feel blessed, blessed because my training has lead me to value the texts that we read for the various Sundays and then to preach on one of those texts. This has been a blessing because I am thus not constrained to find “topical” sermons or “put together some sort of “themed” sermon series based on what I think is important. By following and preaching on the readings of the Church year, you know the focus is going to be the life, times and application of Jesus to our lives.

Take for instance this particular text. It is just filled with pertinent and important verses that address various aspects and realities of our faith. If I would try to preach on the entire text I can guarantee it would be one of the longest sermons you have ever been exposed to. I would guess that many of you around lunch time would say, “Wow, enough Pastor!”

Look at the section of our text that says, **“18To be sure, many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. I told you about them often, and now I am saying it while weeping. 19Their end is destruction, their god is their appetite, and their glory is in their shame. They are thinking only about earthly things.”** I could spend a whole bunch of time talking about the various teachings that many of today’s churches get into and why they are contrary to what God’s Word says. It is a great portion of Scripture to remind us that we need to be careful with our souls. Just because it is a church doesn’t mean it is a Godly church. Just because that church talks about Jesus doesn’t mean it is a Christian church. Our text is warning us to be aware and to make sure and measure things according to God’s Holy Word.

Here is a simple measure for you to use. If your church in any way or fashion indicates that the Bible is nothing more than the pious religious writings of men that must be carefully studied to come up with “godly teachings”, well, run! If your church does not believe that every jot and tittle of the Bible is of and from God and absolute truth, then that church has abandoned its mission to Jesus. I say this because of what this says. **“Many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.”**

Or look at that opening verses where we hear this: **“12Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus also took hold of me. 13Brothers, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it yet, but there is one thing I do: Forgetting the things that are behind and straining toward the things that are ahead, 14I press on toward the goal, for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”** Do you hear that language? The Apostle Paul is inspired by the Holy Spirit to remind you that faith is pretty hard work. We don’t just come to faith and that’s it, now we can be “couch potato Christians.” The words that are used here are words connected to the training and dedication of the premier athlete, in this case we can picture the premier runner. We are in a race of Olympic proportion and our goal is to train to win, to gain the crown of victory in that race! Please, we are not being told that we must earn heaven by our works but we are being reminded that faith is much more than just saying “Oh, yeah, I believe.” What you believe, how you believe, the point of your faith and making sure to keep it all straight for yourself is compared to the Olympic runner. There is training to do and that training is for as long as we are in this world!

Or how about that section where we hear this: **“Brothers, join together in imitating me and paying attention to those who are walking according to the pattern we gave you.”** Aren’t you shocked? We are being encouraged to imitate men, mind you, Godly men, namely the Apostles as a way of keeping faith strong and sure. Imitate the Godly people among us? When they are men true to the Lord and His Word, absolutely! When they are imitators of Christ, again based on the Word, for sure. It is one way that God can and does encourage our faith life. Yet I will guess that many of you are shocked to find this encouragement in your Bible.

Well, I think you can already guess that none of those sections is what I wanted to preach on. They are worthy and wonderful words with lessons galore for our lives and faith but as I studied this text I determined that the words I thought most important for us today is our highlighted text. Let look at these words under this theme: **A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN.**

Yes, I chose this text and theme because of all the events happening around us. We have an election year going on, not to mention the pandemic and economic disaster this pandemic has brought. For many people, on both sides of the political debate, there is a lot at stake. Both sides say if this guy is elected it will be disaster and both sides claim, “Elect this guy and everything is going to be alright.” And it doesn’t matter which side of this political debate you are on because the bottom line is that you are worried, you are concerned with might be and could be and…it is all quite disconcerting. Yet here is the biggest and most important truth for you to grasp, a truth that will bring calm and peace to your soul. Dear people, your true citizenship is in heaven. What does this mean?

Well, the first thing is to grasp that God and his wonder is what is behind this truth. I recently saw two social media posts that reminded me of this truth. The first one said, *“Don’t let the elephant and the donkey cause you to forget you belong to the Lamb.”* Seriously, those are pretty simple and yet very wise words. As a child of God, as an heir of eternal life my first calling, my duty is to grant to God his status as God and this simply because God has so loved me that he sent his Son to be my Savior from sin. When I allow God’s Word to rule in my life I know that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. Jesus promises he is with us. Jesus promises He will make all things work out for our eternal good and salvation. Jesus promises to never give us more than we can bear. That’s a big part of what it means to be a citizen of Heaven. Jesus has it all in hand, his gracious, saving, forgiving and loving hands.

The other social post that I saw started this way. *“Here are a few things to remember this election. 1. After the election God is still in control.”* There were a number of other statements that followed, but honestly, that is the most important. God is in control! God will cause things to happen in just the way he wants them to fulfill his purpose. Maybe your candidate will get elected and the USA as we know it will cease to exist. Well, God is in control. If that is how God wants history to unfold because it serves his will and purpose, then so be it. You can find example after example in the Bible of how tough things went down and it ended up serving the ultimate purpose of God. Remember you are not God. You don’t know what He knows and you don’t know his earthly plan for you. You are to trust in God. You are to grasp that he has your ultimate good and salvation in mind even though you can’t see it. I can tell you this, when Jesus was hanging on the cross, not a single disciple standing there at the time grasped how this served the salvation of the world! Trust God. Trust God because of the great and awesome promises and hope he gives, especially the one we find today: we have a citizenship in heaven.

Our goal is heaven. God’s goal for us is our eternal life in heaven. We are waiting, some of us very anxiously and some of us with eager anticipation for this awesome and wonderful gift of heaven. Did you notice how this idea of heaven was in direct opposition to the previous sentence? That previous sentence said, **“They are thinking only about earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven.”** We are to think different, to see this world differently. We are to grasp life with the perspective of the eternal life to come!

With that you can now begin to understand some of the other wondrous things that God says to us. Take Romans 8:18. These words are the direct application of what is said in our verse: **“For I conclude that our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.”** Here is another set of verses that makes the same kind of application. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18: **“Therefore we are not discouraged. But even if our outer self is wasting away, yet our inner self is being renewed day by day. Yes, our momentary, light trouble produces for us an eternal weight of glory that is far beyond any comparison. We are not focusing on what is seen, but one what is not seen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal.”**

Our viewpoint is eternal and heavenly. Troubles, whatever they may be: trauma, poverty, loss of loved ones, yes even including debilitating illness or terminal illness, these when viewed with the eyes of faith are momentary troubles because we have the promise of eternal life and salvation in Jesus. Seriously, how can we lose? In essence we are living a life here that is just, how does the 23rd Psalm put it: “a walk through the valley of the shadow of death where we don’t have to fear because God is right there with us.” That’s why our text states, **“We are eagerly waiting for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

There it is, we are waiting for Jesus. He is real. He is coming again. He is going to take us to be with him forever and ever in his heavenly kingdom. That is the whole point of Jesus. The life and salvation that he has won for us. That’s why he came. That’s why the next line says, **“By the power that enables him to subject all things to himself.”**

Now that verse goes on and speaks of our heavenly transformation, but for right now just grasp the full implication of those words. What is the power of Jesus and how has it been demonstrated? First off, recognize that **“all authority in heaven and on earth**” has been given to Jesus. Jesus sits at the right hand of God and rules over all things for the Father and for our eternal good. How did he get that position, better yet, how do we know he has that position? I put it that way because Jesus always was God. Before he came into this world he existed at a part of the Trinity of God, equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit in all things. So realize that Jesus has always been God. But how do we know this? That’s the whole point of the Holy Scripture. The Old Testament was God promises of the Savior to come and how we could identify him as the Savior. The New Testament is the record of how Jesus fulfilled all the Old Testament promises and thus was clearly revealed as our Lord and Savior. And it all hinges on….that’s right, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Because even though Jesus may have fulfilled promises of a virgin birth and doing miracle after miracle, it all means nothing without the resurrection. The ultimate way we grasp the truth of Jesus is the resurrection. God told us we would know who his Son is because he would die and then rise from the dead as the absolute proof of who he is. If Jesus dies and stays dead then we have nothing more than another human killed by a government. Jesus dies and stays dead, he is nothing. So note that the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus, testified to by multiple witnesses is the whole key to the matter. That matter of faith is this:

Jesus suffered and died on the cross as atonement for all the sins of the world. That’s what God’s Word promised would be, that’s what Jesus said would be and that’s what the resurrection affirms beyond all doubt. Jesus rose from the dead and because of that we know he is God’s Son, our Savior, the revealer of all that is Godly and necessary for eternal life and salvation. You want to know the true God then know Jesus and his gift of eternal life. And then Jesus took his rightful place at the right hand of God where all authority in heaven and earth is in his hands. It is made clear, faith, trust in the gift of salvation won by Jesus is the measure. Everything of faith is given and supplied by Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit that Jesus and his Father have sent. The Holy Spirit leads us to faith and trust in Jesus as the Savior and giver of life. The end result?

Now comes that final part of our last verse: **“he will transform our humble bodies to be like his glorious body.”** People, you can’t talk glorious body of Jesus unless you talk about, believe in and fully accept his resurrection from the dead. That resurrection of Jesus is the promise to us that we are going to heaven and we are going to have glorified bodies, eternal and immortal bodies just like Jesus has.

Implications? We are with Jesus in heaven forever. In the song “Amazing Grace” there is a line that I have always enjoyed and marvel at because it is just such a simple way of expressing the wonders of eternal life. It is the last verse. It says, ***“When we’ve been there ten thousand years…we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise than when we’d first begun.”***That song measures in ten thousand years and says you got that much time even yet again. Now, you compare that to the 70, 80, or 90 years we might have in this world and ask which is more important. Answer: A citizenship in heaven.

That’s what we have. All in Jesus. I have family in heaven because of the promise of Jesus. I have family enjoying the peace, and eternal joy of being with Jesus in holiness and perfection because of Jesus and it is so comforting and strengthening to know that. They have been blessed to be right now, active citizens of heaven. One day, because of Jesus, I will join them. This is my hope, my confidence and the absolute sureness of what Jesus has done. God bless, dear citizen of heaven. Amen.