

## Pilgrim's Progress

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As I did on the Day of Atonement, I would like to begin this sermon with its title. Although as I said on Atonement this is not typical of what I do, it is important for you to keep this title in your minds as the overall pictures you need to keep throughout this message.

The title I have given this sermon is Pilgrim's Progress, because when it comes right down to it, this is a very significant part of God's holy days. As I said in the Atonement sermon, the focal point of God's holy days is, and must always be, Jesus Christ, who is the center figure within each of them through all of them, with that clearly the main picture.

Our very personal walk with Him and our promise to learn to live as He lives, must be a significant part of these days as well. Without Him we can do nothing, but through Him, by Him, there is no limit to what God is going to accomplish within each one of us.

Some of us are familiar with the term Pilgrim's Progress, although most probably are not familiar with the origins of its title. You may have considered the title as the story of those who fled persecution in Europe to religious freedom of the new world, although I am fairly certain that some of you are familiar with the title and the actual work.

This sermon is on our own unique pilgrim progress, and the literary work that it compares to might be by John Bunyan, that bears the name from a quite different angle. There may be something to consider in Bunyan's work, and Bunion himself as we begin this sermon.

The literary work Pilgrim's Progress is an allegorical tale written by Bunyan while he was in prison and published in 1678. It is a highly acclaimed piece and so-called Christian English literature. It was very popular when it was published and remained popular all the way into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a

matter of fact, it has been translated into several other languages, and is still, as far I know, has never been out of publication and probably you can get it off the Internet.

I am using it as a starting point for this sermon. Please do not think that I am endorsing the book as the proper source material to help you along your own pilgrim's progress into the Kingdom of God. Our source of material must always be the truth of God, as written in the Holy Scriptures. But often we find helpful analogies that come from books, movies, etc. that have been produced by the minds of men but could not even begin to make the right connections that you can. But we can use these for some interesting sidelights.

As I said, Bunyan wrote Pilgrim's Progress while he was in prison, and as we are going through this axial time in history of our own, we may find some help to consider why he was in prison. Bunyan was a popular Puritan preacher, and of course a Sunday sabbath keeper which immediately helps us understand his perspective of truth was skewed. However, we may be able to pick up a few helpful points from the circumstances of his imprisonment.

In England there had been a growing intolerance for those who were non-Anglican religions. Some of these people included the Mayflower pilgrims who already fled to America in the early 1600s. But by the time Charles the II became king of England, in 1660, the Clarendon Code had been put in place. It was a code that was considered appropriate behavior by religious groups that were not in line with the conformity of the Church of England. These groups included Jews, Catholics, Puritans, and even Protestant groups that were in line with the Church of England but considered the Pope-like stature of the king of England too much like Catholicism.

Under Henry the VIII and his daughter Elizabeth, this was more a political issue than a religious issue, but by the time of Charles II it was a very strong religious belief issue. In 1664 Parliament passed a law within the Clarendon Code that gave the strength of law to the intolerance of the code. It was called the Conventical Act of 1664. It forbade conventicles, defined as religious assemblies of more than 5 people, other than immediate family, outside the auspices of the Church of England.

Brethren, does this not sound like something that we see, the intolerance that goes on around us, happening in this country but in different directions. It is good to remember that within all this various non-Church of England groups was probably some small remnant of Christ's true church. That little flock that would eventually be fleeing to the United States.

Remember that Satan is *always* aiming at the body of Christ. Even though most of that seems to be focused attacks that happens to other people, and they become collateral damage of the destruction of Satan, but they have not the vaguest idea of what is really going on like you do. Only at the direct invitation by the Father is a clear shaping of reality of what is happening according to God's carefully worked out plan for mankind in our minds today as we sit here for the Feast of Tabernacles. It is only under the direction and correction and leadership of Jesus Christ.

Back to John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Under the Conventical Act of 1664, John Bunyan wound up in prison as a leader of a group of non-conformist Puritans. Although initially sentenced to a three-month prison sentence, he refused to promise to give up preaching, thus spending twelve long years in prison, although it left his wife and children in great hardship and almost destitute.

Bunyan was quoted as saying, "Oh, I saw in this condition I was a man who is pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children, yet I must do it." Brethren, please let me reiterate, I am not endorsing John Bunyan in what he wrote. I am merely pointing to the time and circumstances, as well as resolve that someone in the world maintained as a conviction. As a matter of fact, I do not consider it any stretch to say the way that men have embraced what he wrote as a great Christian literary work, it is just another of the many possible deceptions that God has allowed Satan to throw into the mix, very similar to the way men have embraced the perverted picture of the inferno of hell, as depicted in Dante Alighieri's 14<sup>th</sup> century *Divine Comedy*.

Bunyan's work was an allegorical tale that he framed from the perspective of the unconverted mind. But I wanted us to get from this rather long historical introduction are three things: 1), the title of this sermon, Pilgrim's Progress,

as we consider the reality to us of the complete title of John Bunyan's book which was, a pilgrim's progress from this world to that which is to come. 2) Consider how zealous we are. The zealous conviction, however, misguided of John Bunyan to continue staying the course no matter what it took. 3) Life in this world is circular and what we have seen before we will see again. But within God's directed series of events, we are to exhibit the same zealous conviction but with our focus always on the truth and in direct line with the Kingdom of God, behind Jesus Christ.

Brethren, my intention today is not to give you anything new, it is my intention to piggyback on a series of sermons that John Ritenbaugh began recently on the five major problems with the pilgrimage. I would like to directly relate it to this Feast of Tabernacles and the challenges God has blessed us with as we attempt to overcome the problems of our pilgrimage journey personally, and as a unified, or maybe sometimes not unified, body of Christ.

We need to be making judgments all the time, just as we are at this Feast, and what we can do to stay the course and keep in line with Jesus Christ, and not getting caught up in the world and swept away in a world that God is using for our good—but it is passing away. Let us first make sure that what I am telling you is in line with the truth of God's Word because we want to stay right there.

**Ecclesiastes 1:1-10** The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun? One generation passes away, and another generation comes; but the earth abides forever.

The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it arose. The wind goes toward the south and turns around to the north. The wind whirls about continually and comes again on its circuit. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place from which the rivers come, there they return.

All things are full of labor, man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. That which

has been what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, “See this is new”?

The history of man is circular, it is always repeating itself as a frustrated Solomon discovered in his search for the real essential ingredients to a physically, mentally, fulfilling, and satisfying life. However, by Ecclesiastes 3, he begins making sense of things from God’s perspective.

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-15** To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and time to refrain from embracing; a time to gain, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the God-given task, with which the sons of men are to be occupied. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end. I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God.

I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him. That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past.

**Ecclesiastes 3:17-19** I said in my heart, “God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, and there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.” I said in my heart, “Concerning the condition of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that

they themselves are like animals.” For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity.

Brethren, the key that I want us to consider in this sermon, during these festival days of Tabernacles, is in verses 11, 14-15, and 18-19. In verse 11, Solomon says,

**Ecclesiastes 3:11** He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from the beginning to the end.

**Ecclesiastes 3:14-15** I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that man shall fear before Him. That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past.

**Ecclesiastes 3:18-19** I said in my heart, “Concerning the condition of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are like animals.” For what happens to the sons of men also happens to the animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity.

God has put a clear sense of eternity in the hearts of men, but under the sun there is almost a hopeless sense of frustration within a life that men are any hardly different than any animals. Things seem to be happening without rhyme or reason. But for those who have their focus above the sun, on Jesus Christ, as John has taught us many years ago, God expects us to see the pattern He has purposely put in place from the moment of the first sin. The circular event plan is for our good, to eventually teach all men apart from God to learn the deep abiding respect for Him. Because men by themselves is no better than animals. But through God and deep abiding respect for Him, we learn to live as He lives.

Dealing with these same events following the truth that is in Jesus Christ, puts us on a straight-line trajectory to complete unity with the Father and the Son. Everything that began in the Garden of Eden is still moving in the direction that God has set in place. This whole creation under men continues in an easterly direction, as John said. When Adam and Eve determined for themselves to listen to Satan's subtle shift of the truth, rather than the perfect truth of God, they began to move east.

The challenge we face is not to get caught up in the circle of events of this life. What we should be getting out of the struggles of the events of this life is that deeper appreciation for God's planned purpose that is not merely moving in a circle like the winds that Solomon described in Ecclesiastes 1:6, "The wind goes towards the south, and turns around toward the north; the wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit."

We need to see, through Jesus Christ, we have our part right now, to follow His lead as He moves the whole creation toward the Father. Our great and holy God who inhabits eternity, clearly tells us in Isaiah 46,

**Isaiah 46:9-10** Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure."

Considering this is important to think about, Ecclesiastes 3:15, as it is paraphrased here, gives no doubt to what otherwise might be slightly blurred in the literal translations,

**Ecclesiastes 3:15** (CEV) Everything that happens has happened before, and all that will be has already been—God does everything over and over again.

However, we must not look at this as God being a broken record that is stuck on a track playing the same tune repeatedly like it was scratched (I apologize to all the young people out there who do not know what an LP is), into playing the same song. God is very meticulous, He is not just repeating things because He is scratched. He is meticulously repeating events and

circumstances to our lives so that we can do, as stated in verse 14, to live fearfully before Him and finish exactly as Solomon says in the conclusion of the book of Ecclesiastes.

**Ecclesiastes 12:13-14** Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

So, with what we all know that it says in I Peter 4:17, that judgment is now in progress for those who are in the household of faith, we need to consider how we are dealing with these events that are certain to keep happening over and over and over again. As those with eyes focused on Jesus Christ and the linear plan of God, there is no way we can afford to get hung up on the events of the circle repetition of those events that could throw us off course if we do not approach them seeing the time of our pilgrimage as God sees it, linear, through this.

Again, I use the term pilgrim's progress, with the thought in mind, not to see it as John Bunyan did, but as the real picture that we should have of the pilgrimage through this life, our own very real pilgrim's progress from this world to that world which is to come.

Perhaps it would help if we drew a picture in our mind's eye. Although it says in Ecclesiastes that God has placed eternity in our hearts, as human beings, who were created, we can only relate to that, and understand eternity with our limited perspective within the time frame of the Great God, who inhabits eternity and has created each one of us. In our picture, each one of us has a starting point, as opposed to God. He has always been, and He always will be. But we have a point of starting. Whether it is Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, or any one of the elect that are called from God from a specific time of origin within the events of their day—we each have a starting point, with only a clouded view of eternity headed in one direction. But for us, hopefully that direction is clearly changed.



With the starting point in mind, please turn to Jeremiah 1. Remember, I am trying to get us to think about our own starting point. I want you to consider this in terms of not just Jeremiah, but what we pretty much think what God thinks about all of us.

**Jeremiah 1:4-8** Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying; “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.” Then said I; “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.” But the Lord said to me; “Do not say, ‘I am a youth.’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you.” says the Lord.

For Bunyan and everyone else not called by God and not given His Holy Spirit, eternity is distorted by the events of this life. Even if they do see God’s plan moving in a specific direction, they cannot break the cycle, and are constantly fighting the same battles over and over as troubling vain pursuits that they continue in the direction, to the east away from God. However, to God’s elect who have been given eyes to see, through His Holy Spirit, God gives vision to see through the swirling events that are repeating around us, through the hurricane, that we can stay focused on Jesus Christ, who is leading us to Kingdom of God while the troublesome events we run into are actually designed to create us in His image, not to get caught up in them.

This may sound like an oversimplification, but I would like you to try to picture a drawing of a single circle. Take that circle and twist it, like an infinity circle, and twist it a number of times, stretch it out horizontally. After you have stretched out that circle out like horizontal figure eight, now within those loops try to picture a number of straight lines on a straight-line horizontal run through those loops, but with different starting points, in different places along the way within the length of that twisted circle, all heading straight for a goal beyond its end toward the Father. Each time those straight lines intersect the various points of the circle there are explosions. When hitting the repeating events, if not handled with a continued focus on

the goal and Jesus Christ, who is leading the way, the direct path of the line becomes distorted by the circle of events that God has purposely using to move around in the circle to learn to fear Him.

Either we hit those events focused on Jesus Christ and the truth of His Word that gives us commands and principles to deal with each of the repeating and successfully overcoming these events, or we get caught up in the event and dragged off into the circle.

Brethren, thinking back to what Jeremiah said, that God had him in mind before his mother's womb. Just think about those starting points on those lines, as God's starting point that He had in mind. And how many of those lines never make it beyond the first explosion on hitting the events in the circle? And they get caught back up in the circle. How many of those times do those lines hit those circles and take a little bit of a jog?

(I apologize if I have not explained this the way I see it in my own mind's eye.)

I am trying to make a point. That for God's elect, He is purposely using the constantly recurring cycle of events to strengthen our focus on Jesus Christ, by judging righteously according to His Word, knowing that Christ is always there to mercifully help us along the way. Even when we start to stumble, get caught in the event, and start to get pulled off into the event, Jesus Christ is there to pull us back if we work to try to keep Him out of focus. We can easily let these events pull us away from our trajectory *toward* Jesus Christ if we fail to keep Him in the middle of the picture and trust Him.

In one of his recent sermons, John Ritenbaugh used the example of Jim Lovell. He is still alive and lives in a northern suburb of Chicago and I have heard him many times talk about some of the things he has done. He is a courageous man. But when he flew the Apollo 13 mission and there was an explosion, they had to slingshot around the moon. They had a problem they had to keep correcting. John Ritenbaugh, in his sermon, said, "The Apollo 13 space craft needed a course direction, so Jim Lovell took the space craft and directly centered it at the center of the earth from a tiny opening as he viewed it through the small window. Lovell and the two men that were with him were trying to keep the return trajectory of their damaged space craft on

course from the moon. The three men had to battle together to keep the goal in focus during a critical event, or else they would either burn up on reentry into the atmosphere, or they would skip off the earth's atmosphere into the hopelessness of space with no return.

We all go through a series of critical events on our pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God that can very easily get us off from the strait that is behind Jesus Christ. If we let the events become overwhelming and we lose our focus on Him, in both the truth of His Word, and His *absolute* ability to hold on to us when we start making a few bad judgments that otherwise would pull us off into the possibly distressing events of that circle.

We are here at this Feast as another part of our pilgrimage to help us keep our focus clearly on Jesus Christ and not to let any of those explosive intersects along the way pull us off course. Rather they should become the propellants to keep us moving forward behind Jesus Christ, if we do not let the events themselves become an overwhelming explosion, that blows us off that course.

There is one other picture I hope you can get clearly set in your minds, and that is, that we are not just individual lines on that trajectory toward the Kingdom of God, we become part of the great cloud of witnesses, and as such our own actions and reactions to those trials around us do have an effect of the trajectory of the whole line. All of us together have been called to be on a pilgrimage together on God's highway of holiness.

These are very serious things to consider, our personal response to the events we go through, will somehow effect those on the same straight-line pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God.

**I Peter 4:12-17** Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad about exceeding joy.

If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is

blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God, and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

We are all together being judged, as one body, one household. We are learning to fear God and act within the events of this world in a way that should not only explosively fuel our own trajectory toward the Kingdom of God, but the body of Christ is one united household. Even in our sufferings, especially in our sufferings, following Jesus Christ. In I Peter 4:17, the Greek word for the house is Strong's #3624, *oikos*. It means a dwelling, an implication of family, more or less related, literally or figuratively. Brethren, we are a family of God.

This is where we have been placed, as one body moving in the same direction, as a family. But each one of us has been carefully placed within His body, are on a pilgrimage together, on a straight-line trajectory, headed west through the circle of events of this world, for our good, to prepare us to learn to serve all who will come after us. But in following the most perfect Servant of all time, we must use the sword of His Word in every difficult event of our pilgrimage journey and be ready to follow the cloud wherever it leads, even when heading someplace we think we do not need to go, or should not go, or do not want to go. It is through Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, that we are going to complete the incredible journey we are on with Him and each other. We must not let the events of this world become the focus of our lives, but rather see them for what they are. The events God is using to teach us how to properly fear Him in carefully applying His Word as we go through them. not getting caught in them, not with the Republicans, or the Democrats, or the Socialists. We cannot get caught up in these things.

Brethren, we are here this week at the command of our Great God, in anticipation of a work we have yet in the future, to serve all those who will come after us. It is also a time for us to carefully consider our own pilgrim's progress toward that time in which we will have that privilege. If we are really following Jesus Christ according to His Word, why are we allowing ourselves to get caught up in the circle of events that God has purposely set in motion, to keep repeating themselves over and over and over again?

**I Peter 2:9-25** But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Therefore, submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to the governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.

For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently this is commendable before God. For to this you were

called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

“Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth”; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return, when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins to His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

**Luke 6:27-35** “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit to that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even the sinners do the same.

And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.”

**Romans 13:1-7** Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who

resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority?

Do what is good and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore, you must be subject, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience's sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due, taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

**Philippians 3:17-18** Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ . . .

How often could we apply this verse? To becoming enemies of the cross of Christ because we betray Him by getting caught up in the events of this world and do not do what we are supposed to do according to His Word. How many of those lines got caught back up in the circle?

**Philippians 3:19-21** . . . whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Brethren, do we really understand how important it is, as we prepare to serve all those who will be coming after us, not to get caught up in the circular events that are now the vain course of their lives? |God is purposely using those events with different players right now, over and over, as a proving ground to help keep us on a path behind Jesus Christ.

These events we hit when on our pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God, behind Jesus Christ, are meant to teach us to fear and respect Him, and glorify Him by using the sword of truth, and not getting caught up in the events that are swirling around us. We will never stand behind Jesus Christ if we keep letting the events of this world become an explosion of destruction on our pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God rather than the propellant God intended them to be, to have a proper, deeper, and more abiding respect for Him, living by His every Word no matter what surrounds us.

We are all on a pilgrimage back to God the Father, under the direction of Jesus Christ. The whole creation is going to eventually be brought to the Father in their order. But we are being led back right now and we must appreciate how important it is for us to do our part using the sword of His Word as the only weapon we are carrying with us along the way. We must use this sword and not the weapons of men on this pilgrimage.

I know I am being redundant, but I must emphasize one of the greatest battles we are fighting along the way is the battles of not getting caught up in the events of God's repeating history that He has set in motion for people to learn to fear Him, and grow to the measure and the stature and the fullness of Jesus Christ.

Brethren, this is not only a time for looking forward to the Millennium rule of Jesus Christ, but it is a time for us to examine our own pilgrim's progress west, toward to the Father, knowing exactly where our citizenship is now, and how well we are doing to stay on that course, and to live every Word of God with fearful and deep abiding respect for Him as we collide with the events of this world that quite literally hates God. Carnal nature is enmity against God, enmity is hatred.

This world and its swirl of events is swirling in the hatred of God. It is not going to be solved getting caught up in it. There is no solution within these events. The only solution is that we manage within these events and stay in line behind the Word of God. I know during the Atonement sermon I used the apostle Peter and his relationship with Jesus Christ as example of conversion of a carnal goat leader to a leader goat in the image of Jesus



Christ. But I found it so significantly pertinent to our own pilgrimage heading west, against the grain, so to speak, that I think it is very important reminder as we head into the wrap up of this sermon.

**Luke 22:24-38** Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs he who serves.

For who is the greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves. But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed on upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail, and when you have returned to Me, strength your brethren.” But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.” Then He said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.”

And He said to them, “When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?” So, they said, “Nothing.” Then He said to them. “But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: ‘And He was numbered with the transgressors.’ For the things concerning Me have an end.” So, they said, “Lord, look, here are two swords.” And He said to them, “It is enough.”

Here we have Jesus Christ’s apostles who had been with Him for three and a half years in close, personal human fellowship with Him, but were foolishly

jockeying for position and making bold statements that Jesus Christ showed them were only in line with the carnal mind of men. Even when He tried to tell them, after Peter's bold proclamation, that when He was not physically with them anymore they would not find things as easy as they when they were sent out among the seventy. He was now warning them that there were going to be sufferings and hardships along the way, that would require a number of judgments on how properly to handle the dangerous road ahead.

But what they did not recognize was He was giving them instructions that had a much more spiritual side to them than the physical He was warning them about. As we can see from other scriptures the apostles did not grasp at that time that all the spiritual truths that Christ was trying to give them in verses 35-38, indicating how difficult their journey was going to become, He was indicating to those men how much more difficult the road was going to be following Him, than when He sent out the seventy, and how much more they would have to rely on Him for both their physical, and much more important, their spiritual well-being, making judgments in life with His Word. A knapsack full of truth, a sword of righteousness and truth.

**John 21:1-19** After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also."

They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore, yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No." And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some," so they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

Therefore, that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the

sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. Then as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there and fish laid on it, and bread.

Jesus said to them. “Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.” Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, on hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, “Come and eat breakfast.” Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are you?”—knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish.

This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead. So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.”

He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, you know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep. “Most assuredly I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.” This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me.”

Brethren, I told you at the end of that sermon on the Day of Atonement, that those verses in John 21:15-17 make up a rhetorical device called an epitome, which is an emphatic repetition of a phrase or question. Regarding this epitome, E.W. Bullinger writes, “Peter’s threefold restoration is dwelt upon in these three verses, to assure him that Peter’s threefold denial had not cut

him off. And though he failed, the prayer of his great Advocate was heard and answered so that his faith did not fail.”

I want to add to what Bullinger said. Through that great Advocate, Jesus Christ was also telling Peter, and by extension us, if you love Me, quit focusing on the things of the world, and get to work feeding My lambs and feeding My sheep. Most assuredly, you will walk as I have walked. Even though great suffering and persecutions will be involved, follow Me.

**Isaiah 35:1-10** The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who are fearful-hearted, “Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you.” Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. In the habitation of jackals, where each lay, there shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; it shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The Highway of Holiness is what we are on. We are to be on it now so that we will be ready to tend and keep all of Christ’s sheep, who will be coming up in the resurrection. As this chapter becomes a reality to them, we will be

headed on that highway back to God. We will have completed our pilgrimage, hopefully, if we stay the course and keep our focus on Jesus Christ. We will have completed our pilgrimage so we can be with Jesus Christ, leading them on their pilgrim's progress on the Highway of Holiness.