



The

TRUMPET

JUNE
2013

A Monthly Newsletter of **Our Savior** Lutheran Church

GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR HEAVENLY FATHER
AND FROM OUR LORD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST.

Hb 11:9, 13-16 Abraham 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. ... 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. ... They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one.

Speaking of tents, anybody going camping this summer? Here's an idea: Pitch camp somewhere gorgeous, like the Adirondacks or the coast of Maine and then gather the family and look out at the skies, the trees, the summer grass and sing all together that great old hymn:

I'm but a stranger here; Heav'n is my home.

Earth is a desert drear; Heav'n is my home.

Danger and sorrow stand round me on ev'ry hand.

It could be sort of religious whining – as a family – while the birds are singing and the summer breeze is blowing and the trout are frying up and the coffee's perking on the campfire,:

Therefore I murmur not, whate'er my earthly lot...

Now, in one way, that would be really stupid and I only bring it up because we could be less than clever and manage to pass through this entire summer without seeing it. I mean, without seeing how really beautiful it can be here, in spite of sin and everything. *Abraham made his home in the*

promised land while the Canaanites were still doing what Canaanites do and doing it all over the place, but God's hand still made Canaan *a land flowing with milk and honey, with green hills and good pastures* all over the place, too.

Summer's for seeing the hand of God all over the place. Even if we live in town there's summer skies and wind in the leaves, not to mention hotdogs and fireworks and lawn chairs and tomatoes, all poured on sinners (I don't mean tomatoes and hot dogs and lawn chairs literally poured on us; I am, of course, speaking metaphorically). Anyway, summer bursts with good stuff, sweet stuff, all for us who don't in the least deserve it, because Christ crucified bought us summer, too.

If nothing else, summer gets us outdoors, and that's good. So many sins are indoor sports and I don't just mean the obvious. I mean, what kind of fool wastes a day at the beach gossiping? Who spends a walk in the woods planning how to rip off the competition? Who's phony or fake cool at a softball game? There are so many totally innocent pleasures in summertime (block parties!); praise should come easy this time of year. So if you push me, it's not just stupid, it's sin to see nothing but Canaanites while there's also so much *milk and honey, with green hills* all around.

Yes, there's a mortgage payment in June, too, and troubles don't take vacations. So, considering what you may be going through, it may seem easy for me to say, "Hey, look at the wildflowers!" But it wasn't me who said it; it was Jesus. So, *look at the wildflowers*. If I can't look outside me when things outside are gorgeous, when am I going to? And I really need to know that the works of God are bigger than I am, bigger than all my troubles, bigger than my whole life, and gorgeous and well done.

I haven't forgotten real life. It's just that crickets and summer lightning, and "the shocking green of sumac by the bricks of a factory wall," and the silk surface of a lake at dawn with the mist rising - they're all real life, too. They're all really happening, too. And they're all our Father's doing, the same Father who holds our little lives. Come outdoors and see. If all we get to do this June is sit on the stoop while the twilight gathers - do it. This summer, whether you're on vacation or driving to work, the Holy Spirit says, *Lift up your eyes and say who made these things.*

It's just that *lifting up your eyes*, even to see the wildflowers in the median strip, helps us face the whole truth about what's going on and then also *saying who made these things* can keep us from one sin that is not especially an indoor sport - from a sin that's rampant in good weather. I mean worldiness. I mean the attitude that because the sun feels good and the trees are pretty, Heaven can wait. It's the sin of putting down roots where we're only supposed to be pitching camp; it's the sin of building where we're only supposed to be tenting, like Father Abraham, who lived in Canaan for almost a century and never built a house. *He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob. It was a land flowing with milk and honey* but they were all just camping. But wasn't Abraham staking his heart on that Promised Land? No. He and his son and grandson *were longing for a better country, that is, a heavenly one.* And the *green hills and good pastures* around their tents - that Promised Land was just a preview of the real Promised Land that God had in store.

And it's a good thing. Because Canaan or Colorado - it's a fallen world and even all through this sweet summertime, "danger and sorrow stand round me on every hand", as a matter of fact. I love this green earth. And I can't keep it. Summertime's great. And one of us may lose his job this summertime, or get sick, or even die - which will be terrific for you, but murder on the rest of us. And every one of us will sin again somehow even in the middle of all the beauty outside, and we'll know and feel that "earth is a desert drear" - really. And we'll be very glad we're only camping here. Just like Father Abraham, *according to His promise, we are looking for new skies and a new earth where righteousness will be at home.*

And when I lift up my eyes in sweet summer and see what He's already made, it doesn't take a bit of faith to believe that He can make

a Paradise. No, what takes faith is to believe that He wants me to have it. That He's really going to give to us, to Abraham, to sinners who've whined over the Canaanites and ignored the milk and honey and who have - at the same time - been ready enough to fall in love with this world and let the New World go. What takes faith is to believe what Jesus promised: *Don't be afraid, little flock. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you more than body-surfing and barbecues. It is your Father's pleasure to give you everything that the mist rising from that lake at dawn made you ache for.* We can hardly believe that when we see our sins. But then we see the Beautiful Savior, King of Creation, crucified to buy us the Kingdom; we see the Lord of Summer rise from the dead to bring us there. Then we know. And then we look at every sweet thing on the planet and we say, "Oh, it'll do, but it's not what I'm looking for."

And on the other hand, it's not what I'm looking for, but it'll do. It doesn't *have* to be perfect to be great. Sure, there's also mosquitoes and poison ivy and things that hurt a lot more, but calm down; summertime is only a preview. The Holy Spirit says, *You are being wooed out of the jaws of distress into a spacious place.* And you know what? I think actually it'd be a great idea - in the Adirondacks or on the coast of Maine or on your back porch at twilight - to gather the family and sing all together, "I'm but a stranger here; Heav'n is my home." Because if this green earth is a desert drear, sweet Heaven, what's HOME going to be? And, as a matter of fact, it's the people who are longing for a better country who actually get glimpses of it here. They glimpse it in the previews He's already made: There's the wind in the leaves, the crickets, the summer lightning, the tomatoes, the hot dogs, and the late night laughing in the lawn chairs, and the mist on the lake, and the shooting stars, and we say, "O Lord, I don't deserve this." And God answers, "O Child, wait'll you *see* what you don't deserve!"

In His love,

Pastor