

## “What’s Your Zip Code?”

(What Lies Ahead #4)

### Philippians 3: 17- 21 (NIV)

**17** Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. **18** For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. **19** Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. **20** But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, **21** 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.



#### *Reflection on the Word:*

- 1) Why does Paul use ‘citizenship’ as a description of the Christian life?
- 2) What examples does Paul use for a new believer to emulate?
- 3) What does Paul warn new believers to avoid?
- 4) What will happen to those who do not use Christ as their example?
- 5) Who were the false believers that Paul describes?
- 6) What does Paul mean by the cross of Christ?
- 7) What awaits us, if we are true believers, at the coming of Christ? How does Paul tell us that we will be transformed?

#### *Family Time or Small Group (Better Together) Discussion:*

- 1) What is one thing that stood out to you from this week’s message?
- 2) Why does Paul use the analogy of citizenship to describe our place in heaven? How does it differ from our citizenship in our country?
- 3) How are we to deal with those who are only open to an earthly citizenship? How can we help others share in our true citizenship?
- 4) Listen to “Citizens” by Jon Guerra. ([https://open.spotify.com/track/216VrH1pVtArk8lilJJQih?si=-mUGksCVOrSdtgWX2qUh\\_A](https://open.spotify.com/track/216VrH1pVtArk8lilJJQih?si=-mUGksCVOrSdtgWX2qUh_A)) What is your reaction to this song? (lyrics- <https://genius.com/Jon-guerra-citizens-lyrics>)
- 5) What does it mean to have our bodies transformed into the body of Christ?
- 6) Does the ultimate prize encourage you to share with others the truth of Jesus Christ so that they may also obtain the prize of eternal life?
- 7) How can we pray for you?

**\*\*\*NEW RESOURCE FOR STUDY\*\*\***

We have developed a new resource guide based on the current sermon series. You may access the **Sermon Series Guide** on the church's website [www.greatbridgeumc.com](http://www.greatbridgeumc.com). Click on the dropdown link entitled "Worship". There you will find the "Sermon Series Guides." Click on "What Lies Ahead".

You may also access the guide by clicking on this link [https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/6008831e1113c73717b6dbf0/61855bc9cfb01f2108d8b3dc\\_What%20Lies%20Ahead%20Small%20Group%20Questions.pdf](https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/6008831e1113c73717b6dbf0/61855bc9cfb01f2108d8b3dc_What%20Lies%20Ahead%20Small%20Group%20Questions.pdf)

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***The Sermon:***

Have you ever completely misread a situation? I mean completely!

This week, we have had a lot of great events in which many of our families have come back, and it has been great to see them again. You know we're getting there ... we really are! And I feel compelled to say that I truly believe that God is with us with each step we take and that the future is bright and hopeful. There is much to be thankful for this thanksgiving. But I digress and so back to my misread.

One of the kids asked me the following: "*Pastor Tim, are you getting old?*"

Great question!

I answered back in somewhat of the affirmative but also tried to be reassuring, kind, and ... young. I talked about how I have started eating my veggies (or at least taking veggie pills), drinking lots of water, and staying active by walking my dog Gracie as often as I can. I then showed off some pictures of Gracie ... on my cell phone ... that's hip and trendy these days ... and get this ... I had my pictures in the cloud too. Now that's *young* ... that's me.

*"Pastor Tim, you're getting old. We can see it in your beard. You've got some Santa Claus going on."*

Gray in the beard! Didn't see that coming. A definite misread on my part that has since led me to wonder: Do they still make Just for Men? Or is it Grecian formula? Hmmm ... how many days left in No Shave November?

Or maybe the best question of them all ... what are we not seeing in the mirror that others see so clearly?

I am sure some of you know that today is Christ the King Sunday. It is the last Sunday in the Christian calendar year. It's the culmination of Advent which starts next week ... the birth of Jesus ... and the passion of Jesus ... his death, resurrection, and ascension ... it is a year full of the stories and the teachings that inspired people like Paul to go out into the world and preach the gospel ... the good news of salvation.

Forgiveness of sin.

Grace greater than revenge.

Love over hatred.

Truth spoken to power.

In the Gospel of John, chapter 19 ... a text commonly read for Christ the King Sunday, we find these words:

*Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face.*

*Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"*

*As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"*

*But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."*

*The Jewish leaders insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."*

*When Pilate heard this, he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"*

*Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."*

*The Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."*

*When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement. It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon.*

*"Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews.*

*But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"*

*"Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked.*

*"We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.*

*Finally, Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.*

We hear this story, and it is almost like a misread. How could they have crucified Jesus? How could they have turned a fellow Jew over to a Roman dictator? How could a crowd yell "crucify"? What brings on such hatred of another? And why do human beings wield such power over other human beings and see nothing wrong in doing such?

When we try to understand this story ... an innocent man beaten by soldiers ... mocked by others ... rejected by his own people and his priests ... given to be crucified ... it's one thing. When we understand this story as to what the Son of God endured on our behalf we too are like Paul and have tears in our eyes.

*For, 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, 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.*

I wonder if Paul, when he wrote this, ... if he did so as to point a mirror in our direction. I wonder if he was suggesting that we take a look ... take a look at our reflection ... not someone else's reflection. Our reflection. What do we see?

And just in case, we don't see the gray in our beards ... or the potential for sin ... or the sin itself ... could that be the reason why Paul says, "*BUT our citizenship is in heaven.*"

A reminder that we have a different address in this world.

We have a different way of being ... of operating. We confess and repent of sin and seek to sin no more. We choose to love and serve. We sacrifice so that others may have. We seek justice ... not just for some. We seek justice for all. And we know that "joy is the serious business of heaven" and that the power of this great C.S. Lewis quote is not just in the words but in the actions of those who know what lies ahead.

Those who take the calling of Christ seriously and seek to bring joy to this world with their entire being. Giving their all for a future that is coming.

Those who see their citizenship ... their allegiance ... not bound to zip codes or borders or boundaries of this earth ... but rather found in Jesus and in Jesus alone.

Those who know Jesus to be an eternal king ... and say ... we have a king, and it is not Caesar. His name is Jesus, and our lives are his and his life is in us ...

Today ...

Tomorrow ...

And whatever lies ahead!

Amen!

***Thought for the Week Ahead:***

“All the way to heaven is heaven.”  
— Catherine of Siena