

## WHERE ARE WE GOING?

(Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16)

Intro: I'm going on vacation.  
-For two weeks.  
-Starting tomorrow.

I know where I'm going.  
-But I'm sure what I'm going to find.

### I. There Are Two Definite Stops On My Itinerary.

#### A. Milwaukee.

1. I'm going to see my dad.
  - a. His health has been declining.
    - Physically.
    - Mentally.
    - Emotionally.
  - b. Last 2-3 months.
2. In June.
  - a. He gave up his apartment.
  - b. He moved into an assisted living unit in his retirement complex.
3. We used to have the most interesting phone calls.
  - a. We didn't chat every day.
  - b. But we always had plenty to share.
4. Phone calls are still interesting, but in a different way.
  - a. My dad is suffering from:
    - Depression.
    - Panic attacks.
  - b. He has very little to say.
  - c. After 1-2 minutes.
    - He's hanging up the phone on me.
  - d. I don't know if that's how it will be.
    - When I see him face to face.
5. I know where I'm going.
  - a. But I'm not sure what I'm going to find.

B. St. Louis.

1. I want to stop and see Fred Danker.
  - a. Some of you know Fred.
    - He's been here 2-3 times.
    - #Most recently in May.
    - \*For the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod Assembly.
    - +Where he was recognized on the occasion of:
      - =His 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination.
    - He's taught a Bible class for us in the past.
  - b. Besides being:
    - World's foremost Greek-English lexicographer.
    - World-renowned:
      - #Scholar.
      - #Teacher.
      - #Author.
  - c. He's been:
    - Father-in-law to me.
    - Grandpa to my sons.
    - Great grandpa to my granddaughter Sophia.
2. On July 12.
  - a. Fred celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.
3. On July 13.
  - a. He was hospitalized.
    - I was told at the time that he had:
      - #Fever.
      - #Some heart issues.
  - b. 3-4 days later.
    - He was discharged:
      - #From the hospital.
      - #To a rehab facility.
  - c. As I've been planning my vacation.
    - I fully expected he'd be back in his condo by now.
4. But this last week I've learned:
  - a. He needs extended physical therapy.
  - b. He's suffering some cognitive impairment.
  - c. Doctors never pinpointed the source of his fever.
  - d. There is some suspicion:
    - He may have suffered a stroke.
    - #Undetected by:
      - \*CT scan.
      - \*MRI.
    - Or something has accelerated symptoms of dementia.

5. When Fred was here in May.
  - a. He told me had plans to go:
    - To Hong Kong.
      - #In October.
      - #To lecture at a seminary there.
    - To Singapore.
    - To Greece.
      - #To visit some friends.
    - To Finland.
      - #I'm not sure what was supposed to happen in Finland.
  - b. Now I've learned:
    - He'll probably never be able to live independently again.
    - His traveling days are done.
    - His daughter:
      - #Is looking to get rid of his car.
      - #Needs to decide what to do with his condo.
      - \*Which is wall-to-wall books.
6. I know where I'm going.
  - a. But I'm not sure what I'm going to find.

## II. Abraham And Sarah Didn't Even Know Where They Were Going.

### A. God Had Made A Covenant With Them.

1. God had promised to give them:
  - a. Land.
  - b. Descendants.
    - As numerous as:
      - #Stars in the sky.
      - #Grains of sand on the seashore.
      - \*Hebrews 11:12.
2. God kept his promises.
  - a. Although it took 25 years.
    - Before Abraham and Sarah.
      - #Conceived a child in their old age.
      - \*Abraham was 100.
      - \*Sarah was 90.
      - +Genesis 17:17.
  - b. Land.
    - Required Abraham and Sarah:
      - #To leave their home.
      - \*Not knowing where they were going.

3. Can you imagine leaving home and not knowing where you're going?
  - a. I hope to have some play time in Wisconsin.
    - New Glarus.
      - #Little Switzerland.
    - Madison.
      - #It's been several years since I've been back.
    - Door County.
    - Washington Island.
      - #Peninsula above Green Bay.
  - b. But I've made no reservations.
    - I'll get there when I get there.
    - I'll see what I see.
  - c. I've taken vacations where I had everything planned ahead of time.
    - Especially when my boys were younger.
    - I had activities for each day mapped out.
    - I had a motel reservation for each night.
  - d. I learned the hard way.
    - Having little kids along.
    - Not having a place to stay.
      - #Who knew?
        - \*There would be no motel rooms:
          - + In Dodgeville, Wisconsin.
          - + In October.
            - =Because of the fall foliage.
        - \*There would be no motel rooms:
          - + In Lincoln, Nebraska.
          - + In July.
            - =Because of the Cornhusker Games.
    - e. But when I'm by myself.
      - All I need is an idea of where I'm going.
4. Abraham and Sarah didn't even have that.
  - a. Not on vacation.
  - b. Responding to God's call.
    - Not knowing where they were going.

## B. Abraham And Sarah Went In Faith.

1. Hebrews 11.
  - a. Biblical Hall of Fame.
  - b. Heroes of the faith.
2. Abraham and Sarah were heroes of the faith.
  - a. Believing God would give them an heir.
    - Even though they were both up in years.
  - b. Believing God would give them their promised land.
    - Even though they didn't know where they were going.

### III. Do We Know Where We Are Going?

#### A. Our Congregation.

1. Involved in:
  - a. Merger discussions with Bethany.
  - b. Beginning of congregational renewal efforts in-house.
2. I say this:
  - a. Not:
    - Critically.
    - Judgmentally.
  - b. We don't know where we're going.
    - We're trying to discern that.
    - We're trying to figure that out.
3. In the midst of that uncertainty we have a couple of alternatives.
  - a. Faith.
    - Moving forward.
      - #Even though we may not know:
        - \*What God is calling us to.
        - \*Where God is leading.
        - \*How we're going to get there.
    - Trusting:
      - #God's presence.
      - #God's guidance.
      - #God's peace.
  - b. Fear.
    - Opposite of faith.
      - #Not necessarily doubt.
        - \*I talked a little bit about doubt last week.
      - #But fear.
    - Fear tends to turn us:
      - #Away from God.
      - #In on ourselves.
        - \*Not focused on:
          - +Mission.
          - +Ministry.
        - \*But focused on:
          - +Survival.
          - +Good old days.
          - +Buildings.
          - +Property.
          - +Whatever is:
            - =Comfortable.
            - =Familiar.

B. We Know What Jesus Chooses For Us.

1. "Have no fear, little flock."
  - a. "Stop being afraid."
  - b. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."  
-Luke 12:32.
2. Abraham and Sarah knew that.
  - a. At least the writer of Hebrews saw it that way.
  - b. Abraham and Sarah were not simply bound:
    - From Ur in the Chaldees.  
#Modern-day Iraq.
    - To Haran.  
#Modern-day Turkey.
    - To Canaan.  
#Modern-day Israel.
  - c. They were looking for a city.
    - Where they wouldn't have to:
      - #Live in tents.
      - #Be concerned with:
        - \*Property deeds.
        - \*Property values.
    - City whose:
      - #Architect.
      - #Builder.
        - \*God.
    - +Hebrews 11:10.
    - Heavenly city.
      - #Prepared by God.
      - \*Hebrews 11:16.
3. Do we believe that?
  - a. Our Sunday morning Bible class has been leap-frogging through Acts.
    - Looking for lessons:
      - #From the early church.
      - #To instruct us for living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
  - b. Each week Linda Christy keeps reminding us:
    - "It's not about us."
      - #It's not about:
        - \*Property.
        - \*Turf.
        - \*Styles of worship.
        - \*Survival.

- It's about God.
  - #What God is up to in the world.
  - #Who gave us Jesus.
    - \*Who gave himself up to:
      - +Suffering.
      - +Death.
      - +Resurrection.
        - =To give us the kingdom.
        - =To take care of the big stuff.
  - #Who gives us Jesus.
    - \*In water and Word.
    - \*In bread and wine.
      - +To turn us from fear to faith.
      - +To move us from earthly things to heavenly things.
        - =So that we can be sure what we're getting.
          - Merged.
            - #Not merged.
          - Renewed.
            - #Not renewed.
        - =We're promised the grace of God.
          - Love.
            - #Mercy.
          - Faith.
            - #Forgiveness.
          - Place in the heavenly city.

- Concl: So where are we going?
- Individually.
    - #Collectively.
  - I think we know.
    - #We've already:
      - \*Seen a glimpse.
      - \*Had a taste.
        - +In faith.
        - +Not in fear.
    - #We're headed for the Faith Hall of Fame.

- So fear not, little flock.
- It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.