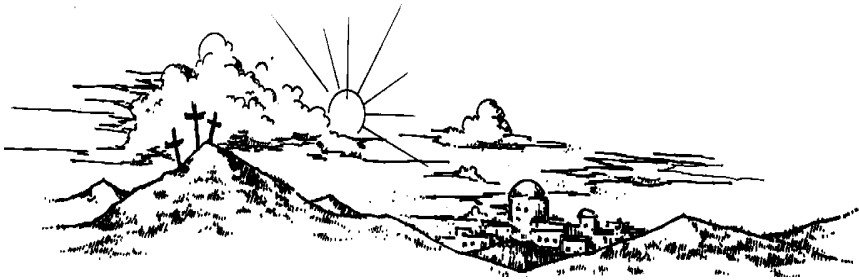


"The New Jerusalem"
Bruce Vantine (1986)

Old Orchard Church
July 4, 2010—10:15 to 11:45 a.m.

Please see print copy for words.



We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

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*It was not through law that
Abraham and his offspring
received the promise that he
would be heir of the world,
but through the righteousness
that comes by faith.*

—Romans 4:13 —

Celebrating Jesus Christ
Fulfiller of God's Covenant with Abraham:
the Promised Land

Blessed be the God of the ages
Who gave us the world to live in,
Who by the blood of his Son
Rescued it from the ruin our sin brought on it;
Who will restore it one day in a great act of power.

O Lord,
Because of our foolish disobedience
You exiled us from the Garden,
And from the joy of your Presence.
Yet through our father Abraham
You gave to Israel the Promised Land,
An earthly realm of splendor under David the king,
To be a shadow-picture of the Life of the World to Come.

Blessed are you, O Lord,
For returning us to your presence by Mercy,
Remembering your promise to Abraham.
Praise is fitting for the One
Who plants us in a place,
And causes us to flourish until the whole round world
Becomes the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ!



Scripture Readings
Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 17:1, 7
Confession: Deuteronomy 8:10-17

Sermon
“Heirs of the World”
Romans 4:13-25
Mark Robertson, seminary intern, preaching

On Needing a Place to Live

Human beings are territorial creatures: we need a place to live and do and be what we’re trying to be. God knows this about us—indeed, it appears to be not from the Fall into sin but part of who we are as creatures made by God. We all need “a place” to thrive in. How wrenching to watch the news reports right now of people in the Gulf states weeping and grieving over the fouling of their “place” in the recent oil spill.

In the covenant he made with Abraham, God took seriously our need for a place:

Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you...To your offspring I will give this land. (v.12:1)

That was a wonderful condescension to Abraham. “What it means that I love you,” God says, “is that I will give you a home—a country, a land, a place. It will be a land flowing with milk and honey; it will be a good place, but it will only be a foretaste of a Land that is good beyond your wildest dreams. Trust me.”

So the land promised to Israel was only a “type,” a prefiguring of what Christ would win for all who trust him—Jew and Gentile alike: a whole world, full of life and joy and rid of evil, sickness and death. That’s why Jews in present-day Israel, though they may have legitimate historical and geopolitical reasons for claiming the land of Palestine as theirs, *cannot claim it by divine promise to Abraham: once the substance comes—Christ, who restores the whole creation in his dying and rising—the shadow has done its job and is fulfilled.* What God was really promising Abraham when he pledged to him and his descendants the land of Canaan (Palestine) was actually the whole world! Paul teaches this in the passage on our bulletin cover this morning. And the true descendants of Abraham, according to the New Testament, are those who live with Abraham’s faith, trusting that Jesus is God’s Messiah. Romans 11:25-27 may teach a massive conversion of Jews to Christ before his Second Coming; but the apostles nowhere treat the Old Testament promises of land as continuing on into the New Covenant. On this side of the cross, the chosen people of God (Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus) are, in fact, a nation—a **holy nation**, as Peter put it, yet without territory (1 Peter 1:1; 2:9-11).

But home is wherever God is. Even Old Covenant believers had some insight into that:

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.... (Psalm 90:1)

And since he is now calling his elect children home to himself from every corner of the world, God wants his people to be scattered everywhere; yes, with a roof over their head since they still need a little place to flourish. But even in their homes they find themselves restless and homesick because they cannot wait to return from exile—not to an earthly garden again but to a Heavenly City of which God himself is the Architect. And it is the Place of all places because God is there and everything has been made new.

—Ron Lutjens