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Sermon

July 4th, Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Rev 1:5-6 NKJ)

Our sermon text for this Sunday is taken from the 19th chapter of Genesis, starting at verse 15:

When the dawn came, the angels urged Lot, “Get going! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, so that you will not be swept away by the guilt of the city.” 16 But Lot was taking too much time, so the men grabbed his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, because of the LORD’s compassion for him. They led him out and placed him outside of the city. 17 Then when they had taken them out, one of them said, “Run for your life! Don’t look behind you, and don’t stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, so that you are not swept away!” 18 Lot said to them, “Oh no, my lord. 19 See now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great mercy by saving my life. I cannot flee to the mountains, or this disaster will stick with me, and I will die. 20 Look, this city is close enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Please let me flee there—isn’t it just a little one?—so that my life will be saved.” 21 The man said to him, “Very well, I have granted your request concerning this thing, so I will not overthrow the city that you have spoken about. 22 Hurry, flee there, because I cannot do anything until you get there.” So the city was named Zoar. 23 The sun had risen over the land when Lot came to Zoar. 24 Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire out of the sky from the Lord. 25 He overthrew those cities, as well as all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and whatever grew in the soil. 26 But Lot’s wife, who was behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

This is the Word of the LORD!!!

Mercy, Grace, and peace are yours through your God and Father, and through His Son, Jesus Christ, true God and Man, dear fellow Sons and Daughters of the King...

Today is the 4th of July, it’s the first time since 2010 that the 4th was on a Sunday. It’s a great opportunity in church to discuss the country we live in, and the many gifts and opportunities God has given us in this nation.

But it’s also a good time for caution. On the fourth, people set off fireworks. You also commonly have hot and dry conditions, certainly the case this year. I saw a recent study that said July 4th is the most frequent day of the year for fires. People can hurt themselves around fireworks, easily start a brush fire, or even set fire to their houses. Do you have a plan if your house was on fire?

It’s always good to have a plan. I remember going through several fire drills in school. Suddenly, a fire alarm would go off. We students, for the most part,

knew the drill. You would file out of whatever building you were in, through the nearest exit. You were not supposed to even pack up, just leave as soon as possible. Then, one person would be designated to call 911 (but not really if there wasn’t a fire) and then another person was to go to the tree at the entrance of campus to direct the fire trucks where to go.

It’s good to have a plan, to be prepared, but I never expected to actually execute it. But, having a good plan in case of emergencies could be the difference between life or death, between routine or tragedy.

Ever since sin entered this world, our environment has been breaking down. Paul says that creation “groans and labors with birth pangs” because of sin. It’s a fallen world. We should be prepared for it all to burn, because that is what will surely happen one day.

Peter says, **the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. (2Pe 3:10 NKJ)** This will happen suddenly, and we should be prepared for it. Today, we will have a fire drill of sorts. We will not be exiting the building, but I want to take you mentally through our spiritual fire drill. Do you know the drill? Here it is: Listen for the alarms to go off, then take the nearest exit as quickly as possible, and most importantly, don't ever go back! We pray: LORD, SANCTIFY US BY YOUR TRUTH, YOUR WORD IS TRUTH, AMEN!

Our sermon text this morning continues our Genesis series. Last week, we heard about the upcoming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham pleading with the LORD, whittling down the number worth saving the city, ultimately arriving at. The LORD would not destroy the city if 10 righteous people lived there.

Our chapter this morning is the outcome. 2 angels went down to investigate the city. Lot invited them to stay at his house that night. They agreed, but they were noticed. The whole town turned out, but this was not a welcoming party. They wanted to know these men, in the fullest biblical sense of the word "know". Little did they know that this was the last day they would spend in this world.

Destruction had finally come for Sodom and Gomorrah. There was not even 10 righteous living there. The angels rescued Lot from the angry mob and told him about the impending doom. **When the dawn came, the angels urged Lot, "Get going! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, so that you will not be swept away by the guilt of the city."**

The alarms were going off. They were blaring. This is about as loud as you can get. It shouldn't have taken angels saying, "Get out of here!" for Lot to leave. He knew how bad it was. He should've left a long time ago. But he didn't.

Isn't that the case with all of us? We all underestimate how dangerous exposure to sin really is. He is described by Peter as "righteous Lot". But his

proximity with this evil culture had dulled and desensitized him. What was his response when the angry Sodomites were knocking down his door? He offered them his daughters instead!!! It had gotten so bad in that city that even the most righteous citizen started rationalizing with a corrupt mindset.

That is what happens. When morals degrade, society breaks down. We too live in a sinful environment. Should we run? How does Washington compare with Sodom and Gomorrah? We just had pride month and parades up and down our streets. How much different is the current mindset from that of those people then?

There's a temptation to fixate on the specific sin of Sodom which would forever become synonymous with that name. But to focus on homosexuality as the sole reason for the city's downfall, really misses the point. If God destroyed every city where this is practiced, how many cities would be left standing? The point is that society degraded to the point where this was commonplace and accepted. Sodom wasn't destroyed because of homosexuality, rather it was destroyed because it became a land where this wasn't even questioned.

Again, sounds like our environment. There's an opening line of a movie that sticks with me for some reason. "I don't want to be a product of my environment; I want my environment to be a product of me." I think it applies to the Christian's daily walk. We want our environment to be a product of us, not the other way around. How do we do that? By preaching the Gospel! Jesus said, **"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?" (Mat 5:13 NKJ)** We are called to be lights in this dark world. We can't ever live in a place that is without sin. It's not possible. So, we stand up for Christ, and improve our environments by preaching Christ crucified.

But Jesus also wants us to be prepared. Be prepared to leave it all behind at a moment's notice. Listen for the alarms! This earth will pass away, so be prepared! Prepare your loved one's for how sinful the

world is. Teach them the ways of the LORD. Apply it to your life. Only when we are equipped with the whole armor of God are we prepared to do what we are supposed to.

Lot wasn't prepared, and he lingered when he should've taken the nearest exit. **16 But Lot was taking too much time, so the men grabbed his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, because of the LORD's compassion for him. They led him out and placed him outside of the city.**

Lot understood the gravity of the situation, but he was still distracted. They needed to go now, but they lingered. This was a mistake. Again, Jesus warned about this way of thinking: **Luke 9:62 "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."**

When your house is on fire, you need to leave right away. This is a point that is always stated in every fire drill I have ever been a part of. Don't look around for your possessions, just get out as soon as possible. If you start trying to take things with you, your safety becomes compromised.

Lot lingered. He and his family had to be taken by the hand and led outside the city. Once more, they told him to run for his life, run to the hills. But Lot had reservations with the escape route. **I cannot flee to the mountains, or this disaster will stick with me, and I will die. 20 Look, this city is close enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Please let me flee there—isn't it just a little one?—so that my life will be saved."**

Wouldn't you assume that the angels knew what they were talking about? They went through this extraordinary effort to rescue this family. Would they steer them in the wrong direction? But Lot thought it would be safer in Zoar, a small city on the outskirts. Turns out, the angels knew what they were talking about. **Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with**

him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. (Gen 19:30 NKJ)

The nearest exit is not always running away. When we are confronted with temptations or pressured into doing something that we know to be wrong, we need to, as the angels told Lot, "Get going! Run for your lives!" Don't overthink it! Just get going! Be like Joseph, who objected to sin and when his objection was ignored fled. Lot's problem was that he thought he could live around this terrible situation and not be affected by it.

When the Apostle Peter spoke of Lot, he commented about him: **righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds (2 Peter 2:7-8)** The key is getting out! Don't torment your soul. That's not to say we need to flee the county or the country, although that could be called for. Rather, we need to realize that we are affected. So don't expose yourself to sinful situations. Rather, edify yourself with scripture and the fellowship of other believers.

The most important step to any fire drill is the emphasis of not going back into the building. It's important to consolidate and make sure that everyone is accounted for. If everyone isn't accounted for, that affects how the firefighters handle the fire. The last thing they want is people running back into a burning building. It may seem heroic, but really, it's foolish.

They say that, typically, it's not the fire that gets you. It's the smoke. You are much more likely to die from asphyxiation than you are from burns. That's why they don't want you going back! Even if it seems like there's no fire, there might not be enough oxygen to even breathe, and they will just end up having to save another person.

Finally, Lot and his family got going. The angels allowed them to go to Zoar, and that was it. We have a description of the judgement in that place, and then we have another cryptic judgment. **24 Then the Lord**

rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire out of the sky from the Lord. 25 He overthrew those cities, as well as all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and whatever grew in the soil. 26 But Lot's wife, who was behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

The entire plain was destroyed. It was once a very fertile and productive place. Now, it was devastated and would be nothing but wasteland forever. Lot's wife was behind him and turned back. There was reluctance and as a result she became engulfed by the devastation.

When Jesus talked about His return, He made a point to describe how we should live now. **"In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. 32 "Remember Lot's wife. 33 "Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. (Luk 17:31-33 NKJ)**

Lot's wife serves as an example of what we should prioritize. You never go back into a burning building. It's simply not worth it. Likewise, Lot's wife had the wrong priorities. She looked back when she should've been running. The angels told them not to look back, but she did. It was her last moment, and she was turned into a pillar of salt. She serves as an eternal reminder that "it never hurts to look" is not true.

There is a lot of judgment going on in this text. Rightfully so. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah would become the standard of destruction from that time forward. Lot's wife was also destroyed. We need to remember that we need to lose our lives for His sake, and that is how we preserve it.

But there is a lot of mercy going on here as well. This family is told several times to run, and they respond with weakness. But the LORD was merciful. When they lingered, they were led out of the destruction by the hand, **because of the LORD's compassion for him.** When they were told where to run and Lot balked at that plan, they granted his

prayer even though it was made out of weakness. The LORD could've just destroyed it before any of this. Yet, His mercy and compassion saved the life of Lot and his daughters.

It's the 4th of July. It is a time when we celebrate our countries' birth. We sing we're "proud to be an American, were at least I know I'm free." We are blessed to live in a country where we can do what we are doing now. Come together as a church and worship our LORD.

But at the same time, America is not our home. It's a pitstop. Our country is certainly a blessing. But it's also a very sinful place. This is not a newsflash, it's an ever-present reality. Are we blessed to live in a land where we can worship how we see fit? Certainly. But are we also living in a land that hates Jesus and hates those who follow His Word? No doubt.

That is why we look forward to another country, a more permanent home. The writer to the Hebrews says, **For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. (Heb 13:14 NKJ)** While we are here, we seek to improve our surroundings. We strive to be worthwhile salt, preserving our world by preaching the gospel. But one day, everything we see and know will be gone. But we will never be forgotten. We will be gathered up by our loving and merciful LORD. He will lead us all by the hand to His everlasting paradise.

That's why we drill. We need to listen for the alarms of the Law. We try to lead others just like the angels led Lot's family. We take the nearest exit. We run when we have to, but ultimately, we are seeking refuge from sin and temptation. And, we don't go back! Why would we? We have something far greater in store for us than anything we could ever have here on this earth. We have an eternal promise and paradise with our Lord Jesus. Don't look back, rather look forward to that certain and blessed future!

The fact of the matter is that we should all be consumed by fire and brimstone. We should all be engulfed by His wrath. We are all sinners. We all

deserve this terrible outcome. But the LORD is merciful and kind. He has compassion on us, just like He did with Lot. That was why Jesus was born. This judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah was terrible. But we deserved even worse, and we deserved it eternally. But Jesus went to the cross so that our sins could be forgiven. He suffered hell so that you don't have to. His compassion for you is far greater and better than anything we deserve. But it's ours because of who He is! We are sinful, but He remains full of mercy and grace. **But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 5:20-21 NKJ)**

The LORD has delivered us out of this sinful vale of tears, and one day we will enter a better and heavenly rest. We are proud to be Americans. But even better, we are blessed to be Christians, Children of God, whose sins have been paid in full and who can never be snatched out of His loving hands! Amen!!!