**12 24 17**

***“Thought for the Week”***

***“Brethren, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land.”***

On this Sunday of the geneology of Christ, we hear of Abraham who left his father’s house and his own country to seek a new land that God said He would show to him. Yet, even in this new earthly land that God had promised to him, he was still a foreigner. He lived in a tent- that is he was never fully and permanently at home in this land.

 This has a deep meaning for us, my beloved in Christ. Even though we are in the world, we are not of the world. Even though we enjoy the many earthly blessings that our God has provided for us- our ultimate hope does not lay in these things, but rather in the Living God who provides them for us.

 If we are fully at home on this earth, then we become citizens of this earth. That is, our ultimate aim becomes earthly. We seek riches, for in them we think we have security. We seek the best and richest foods because we think that they will satisfy us with life and joy. We seek praise from other people because we think by this that we will have honor and glory. St. Paul warns us severely, and even weeps for those who fall into this trap. He writes: ***“18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame-- who set their mind on earthly things.20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,*** (Phi 3:18-20 NKJ)

Finally, my beloved, even though we are strangers in this “world” we, at the same time, also love the world that our God has given us. The material blessings, the beauty of nature, our good health, our friends, and our blessed marriages and our families are never to be despised. They are to be accepted with thankfulness and joy, and offered back to God in love. If we are truly citizens of heaven, we will be the most wonderful citizens of this earth. We will love all people and never feel better than others. We will sacrifice our own desires and do good for one purpose- that all of us might be saved. God desires all people to be saved and we must also desire this. This can only take place if we love our neighbor as ourselves. What we must reject and be strangers to is sin and pride. Even if others speak evil of us, we must still do good to them, for in this both they and we will be saved. Let us end with a quote from St. Peter: ***“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. Therefore, submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake…”*** Amen.