

Calvin was a builder. He built houses. He fixed roofs. He worked on our church steeple. He poured our sidewalks. He built up a good farm with hay and cattle, beans and hogs, ducks and geese. He tended a garden. He participated in meetings of the Elks Club and served as Exalted Ruler. And he built up a family. A rather large family. Actually, a huge family. And it wasn't just a question of numbers. He taught his 11 children all the values that he had: how to take care of yourself, how to prove yourself, how to learn new skills, and when to stop if you can't do something right. He was very involved with his children and grandchildren. He hunted and fished in his free time, and he took kids along with him. There was never free time from his family. Calvin's faith was so important to him that he sacrificed to send all 11 children to school here at St. Rita's. All were baptized and confirmed, and everyone understood that faith was supposed to be as much a part of your life as your home and your family. Those values sustained him through the most difficult part of his life, when he lost his beloved bride Betty Lou after 45 years of marriage. With his family, his closest friends, and his faith as his guides, he was able to continue the past fifteen years.

You see, somewhere along the line, Calvin learned that God also was a builder. This is the message that Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Paul says God builds us in two ways – as an earthly building and as a heavenly one. Paul calls our earthly dwelling a tent, the kind of home that you fold up when it is time to move on. But when that happens, he says, “we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven. Paul says, “what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal.” Calvin endured many illnesses throughout his life. He would understand what Paul says about the human body: “although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.” All that Calvin certainly understood.

He may not have fully grasped the message that comes in John's gospel. Jesus reaffirms the image of God as the builder. He says his father's house has many dwelling places, and that he was departing from this world in order to prepare a place for his followers. Imagine Jesus, dressed like Calvin, building a home for him.

But that is the promise Jesus offers us if we live each day as if it were our last, devoting our time to the things that matter the most to us and to the people we love, living as his disciples in a way that is honorable. Even though we mourn the loss of a great man today, we are grateful for his life. And we take this opportunity to recommit ourselves to family, to work, and to faith, in the hope that at the end of our days, Christ will have a dwelling place ready for us in the house of his Father.