



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

In the name of the loving, liberating, and life-giving God. Amen.

So there's a lot to unpack in this gospel, as there often is, in the Gospel of John, I'm discovering. But what struck me the most this time around was hearing Jesus attempt to calm his friends by talking about home. What comes to your mind when you hear the word home? What is home to you? Is it a sense of security and safety? A shelter from the storm? A place where you can put your feet up in your favorite chair and lay your head down and relax? Safe from the changes and the chances of the world. Is it the familiar sights and sounds that greet you when you come in the door? The smell of the cedar wood in the stairway. The hum of that old refrigerator. The creaks in the floorboards in that one same spot.

Is it the memories, the countless holiday gatherings, the pictures on the walls, the keepsakes on the dresser, the countless trinkets in our junk drawers? Each one with a story to tell. Is home for you about the people, the hopes and the hurts that were shared, the games that were played, the guests that were welcome, the arguments that were had, the fences that were mended? Is it a place where you can let your hair down and let your guard down? A place where you can lounge around in your favorite pajamas. That old worn out t-shirt from college that really should be thrown away. Is home the one place where you could also be you? A place where you never had to measure up, but just needed to show up, and somehow that was always enough.

I think there's no question that home has a special place in the human heart. Even when our own homes didn't always live up to our hopes, the longing for a home that would never leaves us. You hear it all the time when we are feeling lonely or abandoned or adrift with despair. When we've endured the ordeal, when we've survived the near miss, when we've made it through the operation, whatever, the trial, when it's all over and we're asked, what do you want to do now? How often have we said, I just want to go home. Yeah, I think I just want to go home.

St. Augustine described this longing long ago when he wrote of God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee. We are hardwired for home. It's our default GPS setting. And it runs deep because we all long for that place of peace and harmony at last, where we are greeted with open arms no matter how long it's been, we are welcomed with an open heart no matter what we've done.

Perhaps this is why Jesus speaks of home in our gospel today, which even though we are in Easter, has brought us back to Holy Week once more. Back to the upper room. The Last Supper is over. Jesus has finished washing their feet and He has just told them that He will be betrayed that very night, and that His life is coming to an end. It hits them like a ton of bricks, and we can imagine how devastating it must be to hear, because many of us have been there as well, have we not? Been on the receiving ends of news that in an instant pulls the rug out from under us? When everything we thought we knew, everything we thought we could count on is suddenly up for grabs. Where all the answers that we thought we had about life are now just questions once more. But now what am I to do? Where am I to go? How will I manage? Who am I now? Who am I now without you?

Ever practical, Thomas speaks up first. Lord, we don't know where you're going. We don't know how to get there. We don't know what to do. Could you give us some directions? Could you give us a map that we might follow? Philip, he cuts right to the chase. If you're going to leave us, Lord, if we're going to be on our own, could you just show us God? Give us some proof, show us a sign, and if you could just do that, we could get through this.

Have you ever asked those kinds of questions? When I first started attending church in my thirties, I remember looking around and seeing what looked like in all of you, this incredible faith. You all seemed to have it. And I've since learned it's a little more nuanced than that, but back then I saw you all as having something I had never seen before, and I wanted to know, where did you get it? Where did it come from? How did you find such faith? And more importantly, how could I have it too?

I had been coming to church pretty regularly by that point, but my life was still kind of the same. Basically, a bit of a mess. Things weren't getting better. And so, like Thomas, I remember asking at one point, where's my map? What steps do I need to follow? What do I need to do? Where do I need to look to find what you all seem to have? And I've heard the voice of Philip in my life. A mother so stricken with grief at the sudden loss of her son, crying out to God again and again. If she could just have a sign, just a sign, anything so that she would know that he's okay and that he was home with God.

The disciples asked these questions because they're questions that we are all going to ask at some point again and again. But notice how Jesus responds. He doesn't offer a map. He doesn't offer proof. He doesn't give more signs. Instead, he makes a promise. In my Father's house, there is a place for you. And the day will come when I will return and bring you home. To bring you to myself so that where I am, you will be also. Jesus assures them that even though their

relationship is changing, it's not ending. Even though He may die, He will be with us always because our home, our true home is with God.

And there is a place for all of us in God's heart. There is no map. It's not a place. The home we long for, the home that Jesus promises us is a relationship, an eternal, unending, unbreakable relationship that brings us into the very heart of God. And so if you find yourself on shaky ground today for any reason, if your life feels adrift, if your faith feels in doubt, allow yourself to hear Jesus speaking directly to you. Do not, do not let your hearts be troubled. You have a place with God. You have a home with God now and forever. Our life, our future, no matter how it might feel at times, is never up for grabs, not with God.

Jesus wants us to remember this promise so that when we are faced with the hard seasons of life, when we find ourselves crying out for directions or for proof or for more signs that we might instead find what the prayer book calls a quiet confidence. So that no matter what the world throws at us, no matter what we are asked to bear, no matter how hard the journey, whether we fail or succeed, fall or stand, whether we live or whether we die, we belong to God and we have a home with God and we always will. Because death has no power over God, and that means it has no power over us.

We heard examples of that quiet confidence in our other readings today. It's what gave Stephen the courage to pray for those who stoned him. It's what gave our psalmist today the courage to let go of the burden of trying to manage all of his struggles on his own and to place them into the hands of God. And it's that same quiet confidence that can allow each of us, every one of us, despite whatever uncertainties we might be facing to become ourselves, as Peter calls it, cornerstones of God's kingdom in our little corner of the world. Not by following a map, not with precise directions, not by getting our hands on proof, but by following the way. The way of the one who has prepared a home for us. I am the way, Jesus says. I am the way, the truth, and the life.

And what is that way? The details are going to look a bit different for all of us, but for all of us, the way is the way of love. A way of compassion, a way of mercy and forgiveness for everyone – everyone we meet. Following that way, following the way of Jesus turns out to not only be the way into God, but to be the way out of darkness and despair. Because it turns out, we quiet our own fears, not by focusing on ourselves, but on comforting others. We feed our hungry souls not by taking care of ourselves alone, but by feeding others. We heal our own hearts by loving those who have been left out. We end our loneliness by caring for those who've been left behind. We find ourselves by leading home those who've been lost.

And when we do that, when we do that together, generation after generation, each one, passing the baton to the next, as Jesus promised, and as history has

shown, Christians will reach more, heal more, feed more, comfort more, and cure more, more than Jesus ever could have on his own. That is the way of Jesus. And it's not just for us. It's not some exclusive club for Christians only. It's not just for those who come to church. The way of love – the way of love lies at the heart of all the enduring religions. It's at the heart of all the great wisdom traditions, and it lies at the heart of every one of us. No matter how suppressed it might be, no matter how buried it has become, no matter how lost we might feel, we all long for home. We are all restless until we rest in God, and it is those same restless hearts that will one day lead us home. Lead us all home.

Amen.