

"Home – Sweet Home"
Philippians 3:17 – 4:1

March 17, 2019

2nd Sunday in Lent

The thought of "home" occupies a very unique and special place in our lives. A home is not merely a place in which people live. That would be a "house." The old phrase, "It takes a whole lot of living to make a house a home," is true. A home is so much more than simply a house or a place to live. It doesn't matter how big the house is or how fancy the accommodations are. As the old song says, "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."

Home is such a beloved place that we want to get there and be there however and whenever it's possible. So, at Christmas, we joyfully sing, "There's no place like home for the holidays" or a little wistfully "I'll be home for Christmas... If only in my dreams." And, of course, in the movie of our childhood, *The Wizard of Oz*, all Dorothy wanted was to get home. She achieves that by clicking the heels of the ruby slippers together while saying, "There is no place like home."

Wouldn't you like to just click your heels and be home? Sometimes, even though you have a roof over your head, you feel as if you have no home. If you are in the military or in the ministry, your family moves around again and again. You may have a house in which to live, but you may feel that it's difficult to really have a home, at least in the beginning. I'll never forget the sorrow I felt in the Christmas of 1982 when I was a vicar in California. Because of that, I was not able to be home in Indiana with all of my family for Christmas. Perhaps many of you have had the same experience. When we feel we have no home, we strive hard to get one. Some may return to their childhood home or a place where they served in the military and retire there to get the feeling home again.

Sometimes you may have a bad home. Parents are fighting or divorced. One or the other parents may be dead. Siblings are at one another's throats. You lack the basics of life. You certainly have none of the luxuries. So, you dream of the ideal home and spend all of your time trying to find a better home.

Some people are blessed with a truly good home. If you are, then you will treasure it and hold on to it with all of your strength. You will want to live in that home forever.

What exactly makes a house a home? A home consists of people who truly love one another while living together in the same place and at the same time. Without that love and with a lot of strife and discord, no house will be a home matter how big and fancy it is. However, if there is true love, forgiveness, and reconciliation then, even if you don't have all of the amenities of life and the luxuries you desire, it is still a good home. Some of the happiest people I ever knew were people that did not grow up with riches and luxuries. They were dirt poor. But they loved each other and made even a meager little house into a good home. When you dwell together in love and peace, then you can endure any problems – financial, moral, sociological, and the like.

God created humanity to live at home with Him in His family. That was the intent and purpose of the Garden of Eden – to be home. Adam and Eve had been made

perfectly. They knew God perfectly and experienced His love completely. They had perfect love for one another. They lacked nothing in their home and enjoyed everything which God's good grace granted them.

Sin broke up that happy home. In our day and age of relative morality, the idea of sin as an offense against God resulting in feelings of guilt upon us may not strike people anymore. They may not relate to or be bothered by the notion of the consequences of their sin. However, when we view sin as separation from God which results in separation from one another, that may be a little more recognizable. To be separated from the ones you love causes great loneliness and pain. This is what Adam and Eve experienced in Eden.

Satan's temptation was stupid and made no sense. He wasn't just trying to get Eve to eat the fruit off the forbidden tree. He was trying to get her to not trust God and to rely on her own intellect and skills for life, thus becoming her own god. Why would she do that? Having perfect union with God and having all of your needs met by God, why would you leave home in search for something better when you already have what you need now? This would cause Jesus to later say, "Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all those things and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:31-33)

Eve (and later Adam) decided to seek happiness outside of what God had promised. They couldn't find it. They were expelled from the Garden of Eden, their home, and they tried to find home again. But they couldn't find it. They found a place to live, but they never found the home they enjoyed with God directly.

Ever since Adam and Eve, people have been trying to find their way back home. They may not know where home is or of what it consists. They hope to find that feeling of peace and security in human relationships, financial success, material goods, sexual pleasure, alcohol, tobacco, and other pleasure inducing drugs. In doing so, they may find themselves further and further from God and a true home than when they started. They may find themselves experiencing depression or an emptiness inside that none of these pleasures can fill even if they keep on searching

That was the situation facing St. Paul as he tried to encourage the people from Philippi in our text. St. Paul was sad, frustrated, and moved to tears with sadness at how people were living. They were living as enemies of the cross of Christ. Was Paul speaking of Christians of that time or pagans? It's not clear. However, it doesn't really matter. He was referring to people who because of their sin, were on their way to destruction. These were people whose god was their belly. In other words, they worshiped pleasure, money, success, material goods, and so on. In short, St. Paul sums it up by saying their minds were set on earthly things.

Does that describe you?? Do you hope to find joy, satisfaction, and peace in the material things of this world? Are you going to make earth your home? Now, of course, if I pressed any of you (even myself) for an answer to those questions, we would know the "correct" answers. But what is the truth? Do your actions contradict your words? Think of your priorities in life. Think of what you do, how you do, and why you do. Let's

be honest here. You cannot claim to think one way and act in an entirely different way. Jesus once said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21) in other words, your heart and mind will always be fixed on that which is most important to you. If they are on earthly things, if earth is your true home, Paul says there is ultimately only destruction for you.

Yet we keep searching. But we are searching for the wrong thing. Trying to find lasting happiness, satisfaction, and peace in the things of this world is like trying to find a home on the basis of a physical building called the house. As there is more to a home than just the house, so there is more to life than material things. It is to have a new home where love dwells completely.

It is for this reason that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, left his home on high for you in order to be born as a baby, part of a family here on earth and to bring you and me back home to the family of God. He didn't do this by a bringing us material wealth, success, and other earthly things. To think that that would bring us into God's family is like thinking the construction of a beautiful ornate mansion guarantees a family will have a happy home living there.

No, Jesus brought love – the love of God – for you, me, and anyone who has experienced loneliness, guilt, and sorrow because of their separation from God due to sin and their homeless situation before Him. This love cause Jesus to offer his life on the cross and die in order to win forgiveness for us and admission into the family of God once again. For it was sin alone which caused us to leave home and kept us out of the family of God. It is the forgiveness won on the cross that gives us a true home and brings us back into the family of God. He opened the door to this new home, this new family by His resurrection from the dead so that we might go from death to life as he went from death to life.

Turn away from your attachment to the things of this world and stop serving the wants, desires, and lusts of this life. Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and be in the family of God. You may say, "That's easy to say. It is much more difficult to do. We live here on this planet. It's all that we know. So, it's only natural to set down roots and be concerned for the things of this life. While that is true to some extent, it does not mean the things of this life have to consume us.

St. Paul helps the people of Philippi to understand this by calling their attention to their particular situation. Philippi was a city in Greece. However, it was technically a colony or commonwealth belonging to Rome. People who lived in Philippi were Roman citizens and enjoyed all of the rights and privileges of the Roman Empire. However, their true home was Rome. After a time of living in Philippi, they look forward to returning to Rome. So, they were able to endure discouragement, trouble, suffering and disappointments because they knew where they were living was not home and there was a home waiting for them that was much better than where they were living.

This is what St. Paul offers to us for encouragement and hope. We don't have to become attached to the things of this life, nor do we have to be disappointed when lacking them. This isn't our home. This is but a temporary dwelling place for the family of God. St. Paul says, "But our citizenship is in heaven." We, here on earth, are but a

colony of heaven. It is only a temporary dwelling. Heaven is the home of the family of God. Heaven is our home.

Simply having heaven as our home is not enough. If we live here in Great Falls, but our home where our family dwells is Indiana, that doesn't help us at all. But that's not all Paul has to say. He goes on to say that, not only is heaven our home, but "from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body, and by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."

Jesus is coming to bring us home. He is, at this time, preparing our place in the family home. Jesus told His disciples what he would be doing after the resurrection and ascension. He said, "In my Father's house are many rooms.... And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am be also." (John 14:2-3)

But that's not all. It is not that we are simply going to be in the same place as Jesus is. We are going to be like Jesus is in every way. As St. Paul says in our text, He "will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body." We will be back home in Paradise as Adam and Eve were. Our bodies will be like His glorious body with no illness, aging, or death. That's not only something to be content with, but it is something to be excited about.

Therefore, we endure any and every discouragement, disappointment, or deficiency which this sinful world has to offer and which our sinful bodies must bear. Like when we go off to college or join the military, or become a pastor and must move away, we can accept that because we know it's only temporary. As Christians, we know that in any place we live here on earth is only temporary. We look forward with great joy and anticipation of going back home and, not only going back home, but becoming like Jesus.

Whether we have a good home, a bad home, or no home at all here on earth, we do have the best home of all – an eternal home with our God in heaven. Not only is our true home better than no home or a bad home here on earth, it is far better than even the best home we could have here on earth. The Bible says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Corinthians 2:9) That means we can't even imagine how good it will be to come home. The Lord Jesus Christ will be there to greet us. Those who have died in the faith and have preceded us will be there to welcome us. And we shall be home. Dorothy was right, "There IS no place like home." And because of Jesus we shall have that home. Home – sweet – home. Amen.