

WAITING FOR HOME

December 6, 2009

2nd Sunday in Advent

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(Luke 3:1–6 NRSV) In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, {2} during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. {3} He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, {4} as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. {5} Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; {6} and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

Without a doubt, one of the things that we all long for is a sense of home.

How we understand what that means is different to each of us – but we all want a place where we feel we are “home.”

Maya Angelou maybe put it best when she said: “I long, as does every human being, to be at home wherever I find myself.”

Henry Van Dyke

Every house where love abides
And friendship is a guest,
Is surely home, and home, sweet home
For there the heart can rest.

And Robert Frost’s great statement:

Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.

I asked on Facebook what home means to you and you gave me answers such as:

Home means a place of rest where the heart is at ease and you are at peace and free from sorrow.

It is a feeling within yourself, not a specific place.

Home to me is where I can feel most at peace, in mind and spirit.

Home for me is where my heart is—not a specific building or place—it's a place where I feel love, security and peace. I feel I'm at home with loved ones, near the water, on my bike, etc.

comfort, serenity, peace, welcoming...heaven.

Home is a place where I take care of me.

On one hand, home is all about family, period. On the other hand, home is all about friends, community, workplace, gym, even the local shops and restaurants that we pass by and are patrons of. But, what does one do when these two things (family, and then everything else I mention) do not exist in the same place? If I want to "go home" for the holidays, where is the best place to do that? I want to be everywhere at once, but can't!

For the longest time—even after I was married -- home was Kalamazoo where I had grown up and where my parents lived. I don't know when that changed, but somewhere along the way, as our children grew, home became the home David and I had created with our own family. I imagine the same thing will happen with our own children.

Do you remember the crazy movie HOME ALONE. It was a silly movie about a suburban Chicago family that is going to vacation to Paris – somehow one of the children gets left behind and left home alone.

While his frantic parents encounter endless delays trying to return for their misplaced son, the boy is shown learning to manage by himself, quite nicely. He masters the tasks of grocery shopping, cooking, laundry and not-so-incidentally also manages to foil two would-be burglars.

In this ridiculous movie there are few bad consequences suffered by either the parents or the child from their unplanned separation.

Indeed the message of the movie seems to be, "absence makes the heart grow fonder."

And when they are finally reunited, the family draws closer and more consciously appreciative of the love that they have for each other.

But for many people – home is not such a wonderful place.

But, Thomas Wolfe, in You Can't Go Home Again,

Perhaps this is our strange and haunting paradox here in America -- that we are fixed and certain only when we are in movement. At any rate, that is how it seemed to young George Webber, who was never so assured of his purpose as when he was going somewhere on a train. And he never had the sense of home so much as when he felt that he was going there. It was only when he got there that his homelessness began.

Studies have suggested that there is a growing sense of isolation to many people - and that home is a part of that isolation from the rest of the world.

Thomas Wolfe really seems to understand this "homelessness" that so many feel.

And as was clear from some of the answers about home from Facebook → family was not the answer.

Even Jesus seems at time to reject the family.

(Matthew 10:37 NRSV) Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;

Why is he saying that?

Today -

Isolation that we create
 Home theaters and watch TV by ourselves
 Or Movies
 Video Games
 Personal Computers

Easy to isolate ourselves from the world inside our homes.

But Jesus helps us to see home and family in a much broader sense.

A Christian family, however odd its shape or size, is one which is a member of the one, true, all-embracing family of God -

(Matthew 12:50 NRSV) For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

Home for a Christian should be a place -- a family with a love more deep, a forgiveness more wide and a compassion more broad than any human relationships can offer.

Jesus love becomes the model for this "home".

How do we find this kind of home?

We all long for home?

It seems to me that the only way that we can create it is by getting out of our isolation and begin to connect with one another.

Most important part of the Sunday morning worship sermon is not the sermon, it is our fellowship time.

When we get out of our comfort zone and begin to embrace one another

We can do that by renewing traditions

 Passing of the peace

 Communion

 Small group studies

We can create some new traditions

We must reach out together to help others

Home is not some place that you find in isolation away from others, home is a place that is created as you connect with others in making a difference in the world.