

Coming Home

A Sermon by Rev. Joel Christian Glenn

29 December, 2024

Children's Talk: Home is Where the Heart Is

1. Where is home?
 - a. An address
 - b. Can give directions
2. Home is more than a house
 - a. At the best of times, home is safe, comfortable, fun, and loving
 - b. Away from home you might feel afraid, lonely, misunderstood, sad
3. Heavenly Home
 - a. The Lord is getting an amazing home ready for all of us:

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?”

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:1-6)

- b. We know the way?!
- c. Following the Lord brings us home: to safety, love, belonging, etc.
- d. Home is where the heart is

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When we think of “home” our minds probably first go to our own homes.

Before we can talk further about our own homes though, we must first think about the Lord’s home. Specifically I want to think about the Lord’s home on earth. It seems obvious that the Lord dwells in heaven. Where he dwells on earth can be harder to spot. He Himself told his followers that He had no place to rest his head:

Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.”

And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” (Matthew 8:19-20)

Even animals have their holes to go home to and birds their nests, but the Son of Man, the Lord, did not even have a place to rest His head on this earth. In short, He had no home. Things have improved in the last 2000 years and the Lord dwells more fully with us than ever before. Yet it is also still true that the Lord has no place to rest His head. It is up to us to create that place within us. We are to become a home in which the Lord can dwell.

The question that we have to ask ourselves then is, “Is my mind a place in which the Lord would feel welcome? Would He be at home among my thoughts? When He is with me is He at rest or is there conflict and turmoil? These are not simple questions, nor are they easy to answer. We all have thoughts that we are happy to share with the Lord. We also all have thoughts that we would be ashamed to share with Him. Thoughts of jealousy; resentment; selfishness; negativity; judgment; control. When we remember that the Lord is intimately aware of each and every one of our negative thoughts and feelings it can be daunting. How could I possibly carve out a true home for the Lord in all this? Does the Lord really want to dwell within me?

The answer is yes. The Lord absolutely does want to dwell within your mind, as flawed and broken as it is. There is nothing that you could do that would make Him not want to live within you. It is true that we will never be perfect. Our minds will never be able to contain the fullness of God. We will always slip into petty or superficial thinking and forget about Him. And yet we can indeed, at the same time, have the Lord within us. This contradiction is pictured in the creation of Solomon's temple. Solomon's temple was a magnificent feat of architecture, and was even referred to as "the House of God." Yet at the same time even this was an insufficient dwelling place for the Lord. Solomon's prayer was not that it would fully contain the Lord but that it would be sufficient, that it could be enough of a home for the Lord that when the Children of Israel did turn from Him, they would also have a place to which they could once again turn and find their way back to the Lord again.

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O Lord my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today: that Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, 'My name shall be there,' that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place. And may You hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear in heaven Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive. (I Kings 8:27-30)

Just as Solomon's Temple was a House for God, we too must prepare our minds to house God. And just as the temple was insufficient for the task, our minds will never fully house the Lord. Yet still we must try. It is in the effort that the Lord's home within us gets created.

So the Lord's home is within our minds, even if we feel inadequate to the task. But what about our own homes? If the Lord makes His home within us, where are we to make our homes? Home is many things to many people. Pause now and consider what home is to you. Think of the places you feel at home. Think of the moments

too: maybe the smell of home after a long trip, the comfort of your own bed, the people you haven't seen in forever but with whom you start right back up again. Think of the feelings of safety, of being present. Often home is where and when there is no place else in the world that you would rather be. There is nothing pulling you away because there is nothing more important than the here and now. That is home.

All of those thoughts and feelings we associate with home apply to our spiritual home as well. We all know the saying, "Home is where the heart is," as we discussed in the children's talk. There is an immense amount of truth in that statement. The wider concept is that when what is going on in your spirit matches what is going on around, you're home. You could be thousands of miles from your house and still feel at home because your surroundings match your wants and your thoughts. And, sadly, you can be sitting in your own living room and not be at home, because your wants and loves and thoughts are not being met in that environment. We have two options when we find ourselves in that place of not being at home: we can change our surroundings to match our wants or we can change our wants to match our surroundings.

In both cases we can go astray. We can be so desperate to feel at home that we give up on something good. If our state of mind is negative we might try to bring everyone else down too: it is miserable to be unhappy when everyone else is cheerful. If our surroundings are negative, we are tempted to fit in and reduce ourselves to the lowest common denominator so as not to cause strife. We do both of these things because of our deep want to be at home. The problem is that we can never truly be at home in evil and falsity. There will also be a deep part of us, the part of in which the Lord is present, that will nag and bother us like a pebble in the

shoe. Even people who insist they are more comfortable in evil have an unfulfilled desire for a heavenly home.

This is why it is so important that we begin by making our minds a home for the Lord. When we recognize that our true selves are where the Lord is present then we will not fall into settling for what is comfortable yet negative. We will strive to shape both our minds and our worlds so that we can be at home both with ourselves and with the Lord. After all, it is the Lord who prepares our home:

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know. (John 14:1-4)

Here the Lord tells us, "Let not your heart be troubled." The time it is most important to remember where our true home lies is when we are troubled. The comfort of conforming to the world feels so much more homelike than the trouble of growth and change. Taking risks feels like leaving home, so we have to remember that we are actually heading home when we rise above selfishness and fight for what is right and good. As the Lord says, we know the way. We know how to get there. We just have to be willing to go. As comfortable as it might feel, where we are at our worse will never be a true home. The true home, the one that the Lord has prepared for us, is that of a good life. When we strive to do good with our words and our actions, then our deepest desires and insights, desires and insights from the Lord, at last find their true home.

In an ideal world, when we put our heavenly loves into action the world would transform around us into a heavenly place. The reality is that even as we find a home within our own choices, our environments might still reflect a different reality, one that we are not at home in and that does not sustain our spirits. Yet even then,

as the Lord says, a home is being prepared for us. Listen to this passage that describes what it is like when a new angel comes into his heavenly home for the first time:

...everyone comes after death into a society of his own people, who are people who possess a similar love, and he recognizes them as relatives and friends. Remarkably, moreover, when he meets and sees them, it is as though he had known them from early childhood. It is a spiritual relationship and friendship that occasions this. In fact, what is more, no one in a society can dwell in any other house than his own. Everyone in a society has his own house, which he finds ready for him as soon as he enters the society. (Divine Providence 338)

If you struggle to feel at home in your current situation or in this world at all, imagine the heavenly home that is waiting for you. Imagine coming into a place where everyone you meet feels like you have known them since birth; a place in which everyone share the same loves and passions as you; a place where even though you have never been there before you recognize your own home and your own place so fully that it is like you grew up there. Heaven can be such a home for you because every movement you make towards use is answered and welcomed and echoed back to you by your surroundings. There is a continuous positive feedback loop, unlike on earth, where your environment can resist and rebuff your attempts to serve and to grow.

That place is real and it is being prepared for you right now. In fact, in some sense your spirit is already there. Every time you choose good and love and life, that heavenly home draws a little closer and penetrates a little more deeply into your heart. This is the home we strive for: a heavenly home, in which we and the Lord can dwell together, in which our choices make a place for the Lord and He in turn provides a place for us. As we go forward remember this image of home, especially when you are frustrated and tired and worn out. Remember to make sure that your mind is a house for God. Remember to let your words and actions house the love

that you value. And lastly remember that regardless of where you are in this natural world, your spirit will be at home in heaven, surrounded by goodness and love. We will end with a passage from the 27th Psalm:

One thing I have desired of the Lord,
That will I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord
All the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the Lord,
And to inquire in His temple. (Psalm 27:4)