

St. David's Presbyterian Church
St. John's, NL
"Finding Home"
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Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

All of us are on a journey, a long ways from where we began. Some of us are a long way away from where we were born. Others of us here are very close to where we were born. Many of us feel like we are a long way from home. We experience what anthropologists call "liminality," a technical term that describes the experience of a ritual where participants no longer have the sense of who they were before they began the ritual (the preliminary or "pre-liminal,") but do not yet have the sense of completion or identity that will come with the completion of the ritual (the "post-liminal"). The liminal is that in-between place, where we spend our lives.

A Regent College professor explained it about himself as a South African who has lived in Vancouver, BC for long enough that when he goes back to South Africa, they no longer hear his accent as South African. So he is not recognized as a native of the place he has left. Yet at the same time, people are often asking him where he is from in Vancouver, because he clearly does not speak English like a Canadian, or a Vancouverite, whatever those designations mean linguistically.

So if you feel like you are not home, but you have been living here a long time, then "liminal" or "liminality" is your word. Of course, all of us as human beings wonder throughout our lives about the changes we experience, from babies to senior seniors. We who are believers wonder about what heaven will be like. We know that the Scripture encourages us to have our citizenship first in heaven, because none of our citizenships in this world will give us what our heavenly citizenship will give us in terms of ultimate identity in the very presence of God. Meanwhile we are between citizenships, having foretastes of heaven, but also hellish, sinful struggles too.

And we chase that sense of home that many seem to have built-in, whether here in Newfoundland or anywhere else on the planet. Home is where we truly are at rest, fulfilled, at peace with our identity. The answer to the question: "Where are you from?" which never is a request for your current home address, may be wisely answered with "from God and going back to God." This may not be helpful to the person asking, but may be the best

thing you can say to yourself. For it is true, for all of us who have given our lives to Christ and trust him fully.

We, like David, want to have the best home space we can imagine. While a home space isn't exactly about your ideal floor plan or fanciest, artistic furnishings, these do get at what we are longing for in settling a place we call "home." We do our best to have a nest that will hold us but not define us. Truly being at home is that combined interior head/heart space that allows us to not only feel good in our own skin, but also give us a safe place to launch to new places, whether in holidays, or moves, or relationships--you name it.

King David built his palace, his new home. He wanted to build a home, a Temple for the Lord. I believe the Lord is slightly amused with this, as Creator of the universe, but also is deeply touched by the heart of his servant. As God takes David's suggestion in prayer seriously, we can know that God takes our suggestions in prayer seriously. God concludes that David has been too much of a soldier with violence and bloodshed on his hands to build the Temple, but promises that his son will build the Temple. And we know that this partial promise is fulfilled in the complete promise of all believers in Jesus Christ receiving the Holy Spirit, and so now we, in our bodies, are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. We, followers of Jesus Christ, are now the Temple of God on earth, through the work of Christ fulfilled.

This also means that we are supposed to take care of our bodies as we would buildings that are the place where we meet God. For our bodies, it means exercise, eating properly, not engaging in sexual sin, in mind or action. 1 Cor. 6: 18ff. tells us clearly that all other sins are outside the body, but sexual sin affects us as Temples, as vessels of the Holy Spirit. Paul wanted the Corinthians and us to know that we need our heads and our hearts and our bodies to witness to God, all together. Of course, sexual immorality has been defined away by our culture as only that which is against consent or is violent. We do not know in our culture any more what is right and wrong in this area or any other. Our church, our denomination will be studying this issue this year, and we need to know what God thinks about these things, not just what we think, or what our culture thinks.

Finding our sense of home means finding God's presence in our lives and living in that presence as a foretaste of heaven where we will all live in God's presence, continually, as never before. I'm sure living in Jesus'

presence in his earthly ministry was indeed the closest we have come on this earth to heaven. He knew when he was tired and needed rest. He knew that about his disciples. So he asked them in the Gospel passage we read from Mark 6: "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." He says the same thing to us today, now. We get the phrase "quiet time" from passages such as these in the Gospels.

We need to find those quiet places in our lives to read the Scriptures, to pray, to reflect on our lives and lifestyles, to relax, to rest. Thankfully, summertime can give us some of those moments. And we do not apologize for the lower level of activity at the church during the summer months, because we need the quieter season for a rest, for a break. But we also need the regular quiet place in our hearts and minds to recharge from God's point of view.

There will always be plenty of time for work and for ministry. It doesn't stop. But we are to stop. We are to make the change for rest and recreation. So many of us push ourselves relentlessly, well into our "retirements" and beyond. But we need the place of rest, the place of quiet, that home space where Jesus can come close and speak in our ears, enfold us in his arms, that we can smell his presence, although there is no odour per se. We can know the peace that passes understanding, that guards our hearts and minds, even in the midst of death and grief, difficulties and unending challenges. We know it will be all right, because we know the One whom we have trusted, and he is able to take that which we have committed to him, until the day we go to be with him.

Finding home is a spiritual project. It is a journey of exploration, knowing where we have come from, and where we are going. It is a journey of trusting Christ for perspective on our lives—where we have gone astray from God, rebel against God, use our gifts and talents for or against God, choose God's way, listen to what God has to say. Finding God, knowing Jesus is finding home. Because where we are may change throughout our lives, because our health conditions will change throughout our lives, because our memories and our processing powers will change throughout our lives, yet in the midst of many changes we have an anchor in the storm, a still place in the frenzied activities of our lives.

Choose now to be at home with the Lord. Give him the keys to yourself, your house, your transportation, your recreation, your business, your work,

career, power, resources, all of who you are. In that transaction, your path home begins, and the healing ministry of Jesus begins in your life as you give yourself, your relationships, your choices, all that you are, to God.

Let's take some time to do so now.

Let us pray.