

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
Easter Sunday  
Isaiah 55:6-13  
April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Home! What a heartwarming word. The very word evokes feelings of love and laughter, security and serenity, warmth and welcome. It means mom and dad, fun and games, good food, deep sleep. “Home, home on the range.” “When Johnnie comes marching home.” But a young girl from Kansas says it best, “There’s no place like home!”

Easter means we are going home!

In the Old Testament book of Isaiah, the prophet explains to the Children of Israel that they will be taken from their homes – taken into captivity in a far-away place called Babylon – and live as exiles for many years. Their homes will not be their own. Their culture will change. Their freedoms will change. Their way-of-life will change.

The exiles are far away from home but, more pressing, they are far away from the Father. There was much to entice them away from worshipping the one true God. The list is long and ugly: enticing Baal worship, seductive Assyrian deities, perverting justice and righteousness, worthless worship, false faith. On August 19, 587 BC Jerusalem was destroyed. It was the day the music died!

Some of us are far away from home but, more pressing, all of us are far away from the Father. It’s the way we operate. We are, again, right here, just now, stuck in an exile of our own making. We exile ourselves into what entices us most – worldly favor. We sell our baptismal promises—for what? Dishonest lives, empty relationships, and inflated egos. Then Satan plants his foot on our necks and shouts, “God is finished with you!”

But God speaks to exiles in the Old Testament text for today! Isaiah 55:12, *“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”*

Isaiah says, *“We will go out in joy and be led forth in peace...”* Going out or coming home, the Lord is with us. On that cross it would seem that the Lord couldn’t be any further away from us... off in a distant land... on a hill we could not climb. He SEEMED far away but He was so close. He came to die with our sins placed on Him – all of them! And now, that distant God who came to where we live, where we work, where our transgressions are committed has disappeared.

Disappeared? Yes! The women came to the tomb and an angel speaks to them and says, *“Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here...”* He’s not here? How could He leave us? But that would be the promise. *“...for He has risen, as He said.”*

Now remember, in Bethlehem this powerful Word took on flesh and blood, and He has a heart. Jesus knows the bitter pain of exile. He was far away from home – the silence in the garden was deafening – and for that reason more pressing was that He was far away from the Father. Jesus was betrayed, spit upon, and scourged. Stretched out upon the cross, He cries out, “*My God, My God. Why have You forsaken Me?*” It was the day the music died.

Yet bodily raised on the third day, the song—check that—the grand symphony of celebration, rocks on. Today is the day of Alleluias and a sweet song of glory that can be raised with a loud voice!! The voice is loud because it’s the voice of victory. Try to be quiet next time your team wins – pulls out a stunner in the last seconds. Try not to get excited. You can’t do it. Easter is that grand victory. Easter is for you – you have the grand prize.

Although, I know that some of you have felt forlorn ever since the bad news became a part of your personal narrative. Your husband died, your child was buried, you lost your job, or your doctor pointed out that lump in your breast or that spot on your lung. Others of you wanted a home ever since your home collapsed when it was hit by divorce, debt, or debilitating disease. There are many things in the midst of victory that still cloud our mood as we feel the sting of defeat.

But still, in the midst of our ups and our downs, there is no place like home – says the young girl from Kansas. Easter means we are going home! Because Jesus lives, we, too, shall live. Because Jesus rose, we, too, shall rise on the last day. And He will take us home, to the New Jerusalem, where there will be no pain, no tears, no cancer, no sickness, no depression, no death, no end!

Jesus promises, “*In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you*” (John 14:2). This is no dorm room or army barracks or student housing. This is no Super 8 or Holiday Inn Express. And shout it from the rooftops – The victory is won. The mansion is ours. It is infinitely better than any grand home on any property that we could ever imagine. A cross on a hill promises that. A tomb with no Jesus inside promises that. A Word from our Lord – “*You will not perish, but have eternal life*” promises that to you!!

The text says, “*For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands*” (Isaiah 55:12).

A vivid picture, this is, of what lies ahead for the believer. The mountains and the hills are singing. They can’t contain themselves. There is way too much to sing great praises of glory for. Why? Why sing, we may ask? Because, we are going home! Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.