

April 5, 2015
Sermon for Easter Sunday
St. Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Isaiah 55:6–13

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Isaiah 55:6–13 (ESV)

⁶ “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷ let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰ “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. 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.** ¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

.

Grace, mercy, and peace from the one who touches our lives, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Christ is Risen!

The Crucified One is now risen, indeed! What does it all mean?

We are going home!

Home!

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. Think of some of the many songs written about home: “Homeward Bound”, “Home, home on the range.”, “Take me Home, Country Roads”, “When Johnnie comes marching home.”

But a little girl from Kansas says it best, “There’s no place like home!” Easter means we are going home!

Let’s unpack this promise.

Isaiah, writing in the eighth century BC, addresses Israelites living in Babylon in the sixth century BC. And these exiles are far away from home.

A terrible reality called Babylon was a fire-breathing monster that devastated everything. In 587 B.C., the empire decided once and for all to destroy Jerusalem, described in the Babylonian archives as “a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces, and a place of rebellion from ancient times” (Ezra 4:15).

Now in refugee camps, Judeans are stuck in a land with canals and ziggurats and the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and the Ishtar Gate and the detestable statue of Marduk.

Judah and Jerusalem and the Jordan have been replaced by the building projects of Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar.

Judeans have no king, no temple, no royal city, no land, no sacrifice, no hope, and no future. Oh God! “There’s no place like home!”

The exiles are far away from home but, more pressing, they are far away from God the Father. Just like the prodigal son, Israelites demanded their fair share of the inheritance, set off for a distant country, and squandered it all on wild living.

The list of their sins is long and ugly: enticing Baal worship, seductive Assyrian astral 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. Some might say it’s just the cost of doing business.

We are, again, right here, just now, stuck in an exile of our own making. We demand our fair share of the inheritance and set off for distant, seductive, deadly lights.

We sell our baptismal promises—for what? two-faced 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! God speaks to you!

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.”*

Just when Israel’s history seemed closed and controlled by hopeless Babylonian imperial policy, to the shock and surprise of everyone the Lord stirs up Cyrus who defeats Babylon and then releases (releases!) the exiles.

A Servant, our Messiah, is wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him **and by His wounds** we are healed. The climax of Isaiah’s program in chapters 40–55 is God’s promise to bring the exiles home, and that includes you too!

Standing behind this promise is God’s almighty Word. Earlier Isaiah wrote, *“The word of our God stands forever”* (40:8). Now the Lord promises that this same Word will never return empty.

God said it.

That settles it.

Faith believes it!

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 *“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head”* [Luke 9:58]; but, more pressing, 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?”* (Matt. 27:46).

A horrid and sad day...but it wasn't over. Why? You know... **Christ is Risen!!**

Yet bodily raised on the third day, the song—check that—the grand symphony of celebration, continues on! (John 1:4; 6:35; 10:10; 11:25; 14:6; 20:31)

We have cares and concerns in this life. Will our marriage work out, will our children grow up ok, will my job be there tomorrow, will I EVER get better?

We just want a place of love and laughter, security and serenity, warmth and welcome; a place that means mom and dad, fun and games, good food, deep sleep with no nightmarish dreams waking us up.

We just want a home!

You know; Oh God, do you know.

Some of you have felt forlorn ever since your husband died, your child was buried, you lost your job, or your doctor pointed out 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.

Some of you may never face these problems, but you will face others. Nonetheless, I could never, ever, ever overstate the promise of the day:

Easter means we are going home! Christ is Risen!!

And because Jesus lives, we, too, shall live.

Because Jesus rose, we, too, shall rise on the last day. And He will take us to our heavenly home, 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 isn’t a dorm room or army barracks or student housing. This is no Super 8 or Motel 6. This isn’t even the Waldorf Astoria or a luxury townhouse. Shout it from the rooftops: This is much, much better!

“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).

And our response? We “join in the hymn of all creation . . . For the Lamb who was slain has begun His reign” (*LSB*, p. 155).

We sing an endless and deathless Hallelujah.

Why? Because Christ is Risen!

He has risen indeed, and

We are going home!

Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria – To God alone be the glory

Sermon Outline

We Are Going Home

Isaiah 55:6-13

1. Home.
2. God promises to bring His people home in *Shalom*, in peace.
3. God's promises are confirmed.
4. You are invited to come home.