



welcome home

AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD.

JOSHUA 24:15B

DEVOTIONAL
August 19-25, 2018

Happy Rally Day!

After a long day of work, or a long day at school, or even after a trip away from home—whatever it is, isn't it a good feeling to just come home, relax and rest?

The problem is, the busy-ness of life and the stresses of the day tend to follow us home. Or, we sign up our child for every extra-curricular activity under the sun, limiting our time at home. Or...countless other things get in the way of quality time at home. And somehow, on top of everything else, we're supposed to throw God into the mix? Where do we fit Him in beyond Sunday morning?

For these reasons and more our theme for this 2018-2019 year is *Welcome Home!* This theme is based on Joshua 24:15, which reads, *“Choose this day whom you will serve...As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*

Throughout the year we will offer resources to assist you in making the Lord welcome in your home. Whether through weekly devotional resources like this booklet, RightNow Media, workshops, events and activities for parents and students, worship opportunities, and more, we pray you are equipped to say with confidence: *“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!”*

We invite you to join us each week, too!

Daily devotional booklets like this one are provided each week in an effort to connect the Sunday messages with your daily life.

The Sunday devotional offers a “review” of the morning’s Scripture readings and message, allowing opportunity to reflect on that day’s sermon. Throughout the rest of the week, each day offers a passage and a few thoughts to consider.

We pray these devotionals will be a blessing to you and your family, and in your Christian life!

Welcome Home!
Sunday Sermon Review
August 19, 2018

Proverbs 22:6 tells us: “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Unfortunately, we see plenty of examples of people who grow up going to church, to then leave the church as adults. We see the baptized children of God walk away from the faith. This is a fear of just about every Christian parent. In many cases we do see such “prodigals” return—sometimes when they start having kids, themselves, and sometimes when life has hit rock bottom. And when that happens, we welcome them with joy and open arms! But that return doesn’t always happen. So, what if they never walked away in the first place? What does it take to “train up a child in the way he should go” so that he won’t depart from it later in life? What does it mean for us to say: “As for me and my house we will serve the Lord?” When Christ is at the center of our lives, He suddenly becomes the center of our homes. And when He’s at the center of our homes, we are raising disciples who worship Him in the house of the Lord.

The Scripture Lesson Summaries for Today:

Joshua 24:1-2, 14-18: Joshua reminds the people of Israel all that God has done for them. His encouragement is to worship this One True God, as opposed to the false gods and idols of their ancestors, of the Egyptians, and of the people they will encounter in the future. They can either serve a real God, or serve worthless idols.

Hebrews 10:19-25: The writer refers to the confidence and hope we have in Christ, our Great High Priest over the House of God. With Him, we can and should boldly come before God in worship. He encourages us to not neglect gathering for worship; for our freedom in Christ calls us TO worship not *from* it.

Matthew 7:21-29: Jesus speaks of those who do the Father’s will are those who, by faith in Him, build their life on Christ as their foundation. He tells a parable of the wise and foolish builders.

Reflecting on Today’s Sermon:

1. At what point was I confronted with the Law?
2. What comfort did the Gospel bring?
3. What story/phrase/teaching stuck out to me?
4. What did I learn about God from this sermon?
5. In response to the Word of God, I will...

Pray: Lord God, thank You for my home and all who dwell here, and all who enter in. Lord Jesus, be the center of my life, my heart and my home. Let our homes be places of love and joy. By Your Spirit guide us in our conversations, open our hearts to Your Word, and help us to raise disciples who serve You. Amen.

Not Home Alone

Monday, August 20, 2018

Text: Luke 2:41-52

Emphasis: Verse 49: “*Why were you searching for me?*” [Jesus] asked them. “*Didn’t you know that it was necessary for me to be in my Father’s house?*”

We don’t know much about the boy Jesus. We have a few stories of events surrounding His birth. We have glimpses of His three years of ministry. But from infancy to His Baptism by John in the Jordan, we only have this one, single account of Jesus as a child.

And isn’t it an odd story? I imagine the horror when they found out He was missing. “I thought He was with you!” Joseph said.

“Why would He be with me,?” asked Mary. “He’s a man, now—He should travel with the other men, not with the women and children! I assumed He was with you.”

“You know what happens when you assume, Mary. You make an...”

“Don’t you finish that sentence, Joseph! You wouldn’t want to insult the Lord’s ‘highly favored’ one!”

“Oh, here we go again with the ‘highly favored’ talk...”

And so their Odyssey-like journey back to Jerusalem began. It reminds me, in many ways, like the classic Christmas movie, “Home Alone.” In the end, they find their Son in the Temple, amazing the teachers of the Law with His answers and questions. And when the two parents ask Jesus about this, all He says is, “Why were you searching for Me? Didn’t you know it was necessary for me to be in My Father’s house?”

The boy Jesus was in His Father’s house—the temple. And, while the passage isn’t explicitly about worship (we generally look at it as Christ manifesting His divinity and His relationship to the Father), there is something for us to recognize as God’s children today: we are called to be in our Father’s house, too!

In Baptism, God the Father claims us as His own! We are His children, redeemed by the blood of the Son, with faith working in and through us by the Holy Spirit. And, like a child whose parents call them inside for supper, so our heavenly Father calls us home—to be in His house—worshiping Him, and being fed by Him in Word and Sacrament.

And, as we join in worship in the fellowship of believers, we find that, in the Lord’s house, we are not home alone. We gather together with brothers and sisters in Christ. Our Father’s house—now that’s a *Welcome Home!*

Pray: Lord, thank You for claiming me in Baptism, making me a part of Your family, joining me with all Your saints. Help me desire to be in Your house of worship. Amen.

At Home in Messy Houses

Tuesday, August 21, 2018

Text: Read Luke 5:27-32

Emphasis: Verse 32: [Jesus said,] *“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*

My grandmother is the consummate hostess. If she is having guests for an hour, she'll spend a day or more getting ready. If it's a three-hour dinner party, she'll be preparing three days in advance. And if they are overnight guests, expect her to clear her schedule for a week. Curtains get washed and pressed. Ceiling fan blades get dusted. Everything looks 'just so.' And everyone gets the same treatment: the pastor from church, the farmer down the road, or out-of-town family.

Though I both respect and appreciate all the trouble my grandmother goes through when we come to visit, things often look so put-together, so pristine, it can be hard to truly "make yourself at home." You worry about touching this, bumping that, or moving this other thing. You ask yourself, "this is a pretty nice towel; did she set this out for me to use or is it just a bathroom decoration?" As her grandson, I love visiting my grandmother's house – not for the immaculate décor – but for the unconditional love.

We can imagine that Levi (aka Matthew) went all out when throwing a grand banquet for Jesus. But Jesus seems unconcerned with Levi's interior design or housekeeping skills. He doesn't care if Levi's kitchen is a little cluttered, or if the trash hadn't been taken out quite yet. Jesus doesn't care if Levi has the right napkins, the right tableware, or even the right guests. It's the guest list that rankles the Pharisees in town. Why would Jesus make Himself at home with *Levi*? With *tax collectors*? With *sinners*?

Jesus, of course, has the perfect reply. As our Savior, He is at home wherever someone sick with sin. He is at home in messy houses. He calls to those who feel their cluttered, dirty, distressed lives are in desperate need of a Martha Stewart makeover. He wants to do ministry! And He certainly didn't come merely to enjoy fine feasts in handsomely-kept houses.

It's easier for me to make myself at home when someone's house is a little less in order, a little more messy, a little more like my own. And Jesus has come to make Himself at home in my house, where He joins us at our table of tax collectors and sinners. We can be tempted to feel like we need to put out the good dishes for Jesus, so to speak. We want Him to see the best we have to offer. But we can't impress Jesus by decking our home with fresh-cut flowers or sparkling silverware. He sees our hearts and says to each of us, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for making yourself at home in my messy life. Help me overcome a need to impress others or you. Give me your heart for those with messy lives that they might know your love and care through me. Amen.

The Lord Listens

Wednesday, August 22, 2018

Text: Read Luke 7:36-50

Emphasis: Verses 44-48: *Turning to the woman, He said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she, with her tears, has washed my feet and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but she hasn’t stopped kissing my feet since I came in. You didn’t anoint my head with olive oil, but she has anointed my feet with perfume. Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; that’s why she loved much. But the one who is forgiven little, loves little.” Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”*

*Come, Lord Jesus, be our Guest;
And let these gifts to us be blessed. Amen.*

You probably recognize that prayer. Many of us say it at meals. It’s a good prayer to know and say. But, I wonder if it’s one of those things we say without actually thinking about it anymore. Do we mean it?

We are asking the Lord Jesus, who holds all authority in heaven and on earth, to be present at our table—the guest of honor, even! It’s a beautiful, awesome thing to pray for! But again, do we always mean it? Or, do we just say it because “We always say it.” Or, “It’s the thing you do before you eat.”

With our “Welcome Home” theme this year, we want to make Christ welcome in our homes. In our passage from Luke 7, today, Jesus *was* welcomed into a home—the home of Simon the Pharisee. He was a guest in the Pharisee’s house...but, not really.

Jesus didn’t seem to have been *really* welcome in Simon’s home. There was no one who washed His feet, as was customary (especially for guests). He was not greeted with a kiss, as was expected in that day and age. He was given no olive oil, which was offered for honored guests for personal grooming. Yes, Jesus was invited, and He was present...but it was as if He was welcome in name only. It was as if he invited Jesus just as a thing to do, but not because there was any depth to the relationship, or recognition of His Lordship and power.

I’m not saying it’s a bad thing to say the “Common Table Prayer.” We use it to teach our daughter to pray in general. The next step for us is to teach what it truly means and why we say it.

The problem comes when we allow it to just be a thing to do. Rather, we acknowledge the relationship that exists between us and Him. We recognize the Lordship and power of Christ. We strive to truly honor Him in our dinner conversations, welcoming Him to the table as He graciously welcomes us to His, through the forgiveness of sins.

Pray: Come, Lord Jesus, be my Guest! In my life, in my home, be my honored Guest. By faith and Your Spirit’s work in me, help me to honor You in my conversations. Amen.

Church Home

Thursday, August 23rd, 2018

Text: John 14:1-7

Emphasis: Verse 3: “If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also.”

I never really considered church to be a home until I moved to Oklahoma. For starters, Holy Trinity was so welcoming, so I felt like I made connections right away. It did take a while for some of those connections with staff, my small group, and other families to really sink in and go beyond surface level conversations, but relatively speaking it seemed quick. Secondly, being away from my previous church helped me to see the relationships I had developed there, so I knew the families I wanted to catch up with when I returned to visit. But even then, I discovered that Holy Trinity would be the most at home I'd ever feel when it comes to a congregation. It honestly surprised me that church could feel that way; that the relationships could surpass the mandatory Sunday morning “conversations” – “how are you”, “good, you?”, “good”.

At Holy Trinity it warms my heart to see so many families talking between services – adults, youth, and children alike! While of course the artificial conversations occur, many of them are genuine opportunities to catch up on life and share what is going on – what church is meant to be. I have seen Holy Trinity be connected; be a family.

Unfortunately, with that feeling, there is a downside. Families change. People move away, spouses separate, and individuals pass. These changes can be difficult but that is where our text provides hope. Heaven is going to be a home, but it will be a perfect home – a home without tears, separation, or death. It will be a complete home with a family so large and so diverse and so grand. It will be a family that always gets along and always loves. Of course, that is something to look forward to and to anticipate.

The other thing this text really highlights is that there will be a place for us. I take this two ways, a physical place, and a place for us individually, specially, uniquely. Sometimes it can be hard to feel like we belong, even in our church homes. Sometimes we feel out of place and lost, but in heaven, that won't be the case. We will have no doubt we belong, because our place has been specially made for us. We will belong because we do belong, even if we don't always feel like it.

Pray: Father, Dad, Daddy, Abba, Didi, so many names for the perfect Dad. Thank you for sending your Son to take our place at Calvary so that we can have eternal life at home with you. Thank you also for the churches you give to us in the meantime. Help them to resemble our home in heaven and help Holy Trinity to feel like home. Amen.

Home of Excuses

Friday, August 24th, 2018

Text: Luke 14:15-24

Emphasis: Verse 15: *“When one of those who reclined at the table with him heard these things, he said to him, ‘Blessed is the one who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!’”*

As a teenager I often wanted to be anywhere but home. It seems cool at the time, right? Except I later realized not being home very often meant I missed out on family. I missed out on discussions, laughs, relationships, and I missed out on vital years of my sister’s life when she could have used a friend; a sister. Not being home has detrimental effects on family.

I think about husbands who focus so much on work that they miss their children’s milestones and achievements. Kids grow up thinking dad doesn’t love them or at the very least that dad loves work more than them. Or perhaps he gets very close to other female co-workers causing strife in his marriage. I think about moms who do drugs or rely on alcohol. Sure, they might be in the home, but are they really present? I think about myself, and other teenagers and kids skipping out on the happenings of home, routinely choosing sports and friends over the people who love them most. Not being home has detrimental effects on family.

This parable may seem like a simple banquet, but it’s the feast being prepared for us in heaven! It’s no simple matter. Church members are being invited to heaven, but they’re saying, “my son has baseball, can it wait until next week?”, “it’s our anniversary, sorry”, and “I’m just too tired, I need some time to rest”. Can you believe that! Habits aren’t easily broken. It’s not easy to put family before work when you’re relying on the paycheck. It’s not easy to stop using things you’re addicted to. It’s not easy to ensure you are part of family time, but not being home has detrimental effects.

Church is a home. Holy Trinity is a home. It’s a home with over a thousand people... and not all of them I know. I am yearning to meet my brothers and sisters in Christ. I am yearning to have that family time. Are you? How often do you make excuses to miss out? How often do I? – maybe not physically (I mean I’m required to be there), but mentally.

Church may seem like a simple banquet, but church is where we receive the bread that will be served in the kingdom of God! It is a family meal and a family banquet of fellowship, praise, laughs, and a seemingly simple meal that provides the forgiveness of sins. Each excuse is a missed opportunity to receive the free gifts God has given us. I hope to see you there and I pray that I be there both physically, and mentally.

Pray: *Gracious Father, thank you for our homes – both with our individual families and as a Church. Help us to value and prioritize family time. Help us find accountability to ensure we have good family habits. Amen.*

The Heist

Saturday, August 25, 2018

Text: Read Matthew 24:36-44

Emphasis: Verse 43: “*But know this: If the homeowner had known what time the thief was coming, he would have stayed alert and not let his house be broken into.*”

When I became a homeowner for the first time, I immediately realized I needed a security system. We’ve moved several times since then, but I still have the same security system – a Wilson® aluminum baseball bat – right beside the bed each night when I go to sleep. This security system has some limitations, namely that it doesn’t work if I’m not home or not awake. My bat is completely useless to scare anyone off if I’m still sleeping and it remains propped beside my bed.

It wasn’t much different for a 1st century homeowner. Jesus and His disciples lived at a time before security cameras, motion sensors and intruder alarms. With no handguns or aluminum baseball bats, alertness was the best weapon to thwart a burglary. So Jesus uses this everyday metaphor to teach His disciples about His second coming. They are taught to await Jesus’ return like a homeowner who knows what time to expect a burglar.

But what kind of burglar makes an appointment to break into someone’s house? Turns out, Jesus is not your everyday thief. Jesus an *Oceans 11*-style master thief and He’s about to pull off His greatest heist. Jesus barely finishes these warnings about Judgement Day, and in the very next chapter, He is betrayed, arrested, and abandoned by His disciples. He’ll be mocked, beaten, crucified and entombed. It looks like His tactics have failed. Yet, this is His greatest victory. In His death for sinners, the Master Thief breaks into Satan’s deathly kingdom and robs the devil of his power and prisoners.

And the oddest thing is that Jesus tells Satan it’s coming before it happens. Earlier in Matthew, Jesus says, “How can someone enter a strong man’s house and steal his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.” (Mt. 12:29) The devil is strong, but is no match for the Master Thief. Even though Satan has known since the Garden of Eden that Christ was coming to crush him, the devil is powerless to stop Him. Satan is bound, and the Son of God makes off with His plunder: the lives of men.

Ransomed by the blood of Jesus, He now tells us that He’s coming again like a thief (1 Thess. 5:2, Rev. 16:15) and gives His people the charge to stay alert. Trusting in His forgiveness, we stay vigilant – not in fear – but in anticipation for the day when we are safe in our heavenly Father’s home.

Pray: *Jesus, I know you are coming again. May the promise of your return fill me with hope and anticipation. Use me today to share the joyful news of your defeat of Satan and your coming kingdom, that my neighbors can eagerly await your return, too. Amen.*

About Our Next Sermon Series

As we continue on in the lengthy Season of Pentecost, our next sermon and devotional series is entitled, *(un)expected Jesus*.

Everyone had their expectations of what the Messiah would do and how he would act. Instead, they got Jesus of Nazareth, a poor carpenter's son whose radical teachings challenged everything. What they expected and what they got didn't always align. He was expected, but so often doing the unexpected.

Not much has changed in 2,000 years, though—everyone has their own understandings, their own expectations of Jesus, who He was and is, and what His life and teachings mean for us and our world today. Not even Jesus' own followers can agree.

Throughout this sermon series, we will explore the appointed Gospel readings in Mark as we encounter this *(un)expected Jesus*, and examine what all this means for you.

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