

SERMON FOR JULY 12, 2020

TEXT: ISAIAH 55: 10-13

THEME: HOME

For as the rain and snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 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. "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, the trees of the field shall clap their hands. 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."

In the name of Jesus:

Home. The very word Home conjures up so many positive emotions in our hearts and minds. Home. A place of love and laughter. Home, a familiar place where we can go. Home, a word that helps us remember the love of mom and dad, the fun we had with brothers and sisters, home is a place for many that means wholeness, peace, well-being. So many familiar phrases are used depicting home as a good place, a place that we long for. Home, home on the range. When Johnny comes marching home. And of course,

who can forget the Wizard of Oz with Dorothy and her dog Toto, wishing to go home to Kansas because there is no place like home.

If you are like me, when you are traveling and see the signs for Columbus and Lancaster, there is a sense of peace that flows through our being. Why? It is because we are getting closer to home.

And so in our text for today, Isaiah foretells of a time when God's people will be going home. Isaiah foretold of the time when the people of God would be displaced from their homes, taken into exile, taken as captives to a faraway place called Babylon. There in Babylon they would live in refugee camps, in tents by the rivers, eating food that they were not familiar with, listening to a language and learning a language that they did not know, they lived as residents in a foreign land looking to go home. But they couldn't, not until the time of their exile would end, which would end up being 70 years. The people of God were despondent, because they were uprooted from home and all that they wanted to do was to go home. Just listen to the Psalmist as he writes when in exile: "Have mercy on us, Lord, for we have had more than enough of contempt." "By the waters of Babylon there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion." God's people were facing

judgment, well deserved I might add, because of their continual unbelief. They rejected God's overtures to repent, to cease and desist the idol worship and sinful lifestyles. They wanted a life without God or a life with God on their own terms, so God gave them what they wanted, and so a generation lived away from home. They had no king, no temple, no royal city, no hope and what to them looked to be no future. They sat reminiscing about the good old days. The good old days came and went. They wanted to go home. They longed to go home, for there is no place like home.

Some of us live far away from home. And all of us live far away from our Heavenly Father. We live in an exile of our own making. We make up our own gods to follow, we seek happiness in the things of the world rather than the gifts of God. God gives us a birthright in Baptism where we are called His children. But like Esau in the Old Testament, we sell our baptismal birthright while pursuing an earthly inheritance. We store up for ourselves treasures of the world. And we end up with inflated self worth, broken relationships, and sadness that knows no end.

But God tells us to rejoice, to clap our hands and sing! As Isaiah writes: "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, the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” How and why can we rejoice? Because of God’s love for us. Isaiah foretold of the time when God would send His Son to take on our sins: “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his stripes we are healed. All we are like sheep who have gone astray and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53).

God’s people returned home after spending 70 years in Babylon. Once they returned home, they began rebuilding their lives. God had not forgotten them, but what God was doing was preparing His people for something that would be extraordinary. It would be something that would be hard to believe, in the words of Isaiah: “who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? God would send a Savior, to prepare an eternal home with Him.

The Suffering Servant, Jesus Christ Himself, came down from heaven to bear our sin and be our Savior. He was placed in exile because of our sins, He who knew no sin became sin for us and He cried out on the cross: “My

God why have you forsaken Me?" He tasted the death and damnation you and I deserve, yet rose again on the third Day to give us a new home. A home with Him, forever.

Jesus told this to His disciples. He said: "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms, if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again to take you to myself that where I am you may be also." (John 14). Jesus came to prepare a place for sinners by living, dying and rising again. God invites sinners to find their home with Him by believing in Jesus whom He has sent.

The invitation to have an eternal home with Him is for all. "Come", says the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, "come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, he who has no money, come buy and eat." Jesus invites you today and says: "come for all in now ready." You have a place at God's banqueting table. In the Lord's Supper Jesus comes to you, to give you Himself, His very body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine for the forgiveness of all of your sins. You and I eat and drink at the Table of the

Lord, proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes. You and I celebrate the Lord's love for us in this Sacrament, it is God's gift to us.

In the midst of the brokenness that we experience in our lives and in our world, we have God's promise that He forgives us, He loves us, that He is with us, and that He will take us home. We have reason to celebrate because the Lord forgives us, He loves us, He has a plan, His ways are not our ways, because He is at work in and through His Word to accomplish His will, and His will is that those in exile will return home. God says it, and that settles it. His promise is certain and sure. "For as the rain and snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 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."

What God brings to His people, what He gives to you today, and what He promises to you in the future, is shalom, peace. God is at work to make everything that is wrong right. He will renew everything. All of creation will sing for joy. For the Lord will come to judge the living and the dead. We

will rise again on the Last Day. We will live with the Lord forever just as the Book of Revelation predicts: “ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. **4** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” **5** And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” **6** And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. **7** The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.”

God will make this happen. And when it does all of His promises in Christ will have been fulfilled. And on that Day, we will be home.

Amen

