

The Fifth Sunday of Easter • May 14, 2017

St. John's Lutheran Church, Alexandria, VA

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John 14:1-14

“The Way Home”

About two weeks ago, the plastic ratchet-and-clamp mount that I've used to mount my smartphone to the top of my car's dashboard broke. It couldn't hold my phone any longer, even after I tried to fix it with precision screwdrivers and super glue. So I ordered a replacement – this time, one without moving parts – and slogged through the intervening days as the frame of the old mount sat uselessly in my line-of-sight while I drove. Without a functioning mount, I had to leave my smartphone down in the nether realm of the cup holders between the front seats, listening for my navigation app to warn me of traffic alerts on the way ahead. The phone's absence from its regular place bugged me, because I've found myself using its GPS mapping function almost all the time – I even use it heading home each day. Why? It's not as if I don't know how to get home without it; it's just that I've found I like knowing how long it'll take me to get there, or how to avoid traffic or other problems as I go. When my phone's where it should be, I can see the way home.

People say, “Home is where the heart is.” But what does that actually mean? I suppose that, in part, it's a reminder that home isn't about a specific place like a house or apartment, necessarily, or about the stuff that you've got stowed away there. That's true. So is home just about feelings, then? If a time should come when you get upset with a member of your family, or even a roommate, does your home stop being home? Not really – even though that might be kind of uncomfortable. If home is where your heart is, “home” must be something more than your feelings. It's somewhere that you can be in relation to others. It's a context in which you are welcome. It's a place where you can let your guard down. It's a place where you can rest, where you can dwell. **Home is where you belong.**

Are you looking for a home? Whether or not you're house hunting, you probably already have a place to live and stow your stuff. You might even share it with other people. But are you looking for a home, a place where you belong? If so, you're not alone. People have been looking for a home ever since Adam and Eve had to leave Eden.

Thinking about your situation, where have you been looking for a home – a better home, even? If home is where you can be in relation to others, what's going on in the relationships you have right now? Is something keeping you from feeling at home with your parents, your spouse, your children, and your friends? If home is a space that you are welcome and where you can let your guard down, what do you suppose must take place for that to happen?

How have you been trying to get home? Some individuals make their home at work or school, where they'd be recognized for their accomplishments. Others go to groups with which they can identify in some way. And others – even if they're not consciously meaning to do so – try to find home in self-fulfillment and independence. But as temporarily satisfying as those places in life may be, none of them are truly a home, a place where you can fully belong where you can dwell. But that doesn't stop us from seeking them out. We know there's something better that we've lost.

When it comes down to it, none of the places we might look is going to be “home enough” if it's not the place where we are meant to belong, fully and completely. And humanity has lived away from home, in exile since Eden. We have no perfect home away from the one that we are meant to have with our heavenly Father. Really, that's a good thing. Why should you have to settle for less, when the best is freely offered to you?

In today's Gospel text from John 14, we heard Jesus teach his disciples that he is the one who would make ready the dwelling with God that you are meant to experience – a perfect home, where you are welcome, where you can know and be known, where you belong. And you don't even have to figure out how to get there, **because Jesus is the way.**

When Jesus tells us, “I am the way,” he's not saying, “Do what I do to get where I'm going.” Jesus did everything that needed to be done, for you. Jesus is the way. It's through him – through his life, his suffering, his sacrificial death, and his resurrection – that you and I have the way home to life with God.

Last weekend on Good Shepherd Sunday, Pastor Meehan referenced the increasing presence of voice recognition technology in our society. You speak, and a machine listens and responds. It works the other way around, too: I go places I've never been before by listening to the directions from my smartphone

navigation app. This week, it's guiding me to my destinations using Mr. T's distinct voice. (He pities the fool that doesn't quit their jibber-jabber and pay attention to the road hazard ahead.) As Christians, you and I follow the voice of Jesus. His is the one voice that can lead you home, because he is the only way there.

Jesus is the truth. He is the one, true God's supreme self-revelation, bringing home the people who should be all rights be exiles. He makes God the Father known, as only the Son of the Father can. There's no other path of access to God outside of Jesus. That's a hard concept for our culture to process, because it's exclusive. It seems like that truth cuts people off from God. But it's precisely because sin had separated humanity from our Creator that Jesus came: he's the one who would bring all people home.

Jesus calls his disciples to believe in him, for he is the life. Look back to Psalm 146 to get a better sense of what believing in Jesus looks like. He is your hope and your help. He is God here for you. He is, as he says, the life. Following him, put your trust in him as the one who brings God's reigning into the world, into your life and relationships. Princes, presidents, and governments fail and, eventually, fade away. You can look to Jesus alone for hope that won't fail and won't disappoint, because in Easter we see that God keeps his promises.

You have a perfect home ahead of you. While we walk together, following Jesus as the way through the present age, we get a glimpse of that perfect home as we forgive each other our faults and failings. We see it as we welcome others into fellowship through Christ, letting go of the things that pulled us away from each other. We experience it as we come to God in the authority of Jesus in prayer. **Home is where you belong.**

Look to Jesus, and see the way home.

Amen.