

There's no Place Like Home

Easter 5A
John 14:1-14

(Don't reveal the first slide)

There is a lot to be learned from Dorothy. You, know...Dorothy -

Slide: Dorothy Gale

Dorothy Gale, from Kansas. This Dorothy - the songbird who longs to fly over the rainbow chasing dreams and leaving behind the familiar, common, everyday boredom of, well, whatever she decided was boring. After all, she is a teenager who has a habit of getting in the way when climbing on fences and allowing her dog to bite unpleasant neighbors, not to mention that no one seems to want to listen to her when she speaks. I would want to run away to Oz, too.

And yet, in Oz, over the rainbow, Dorothy learns some very important things.

She learns that the place she dreamed of is maybe not as important as the friends and relationships she has along the way. And, she learns that she longs for home, which is not so much a place, but it is a feeling of belonging, one that includes people, purpose, and familiarity. Auntie Em...there's no place like home.

Slide: Home sweet home

Home. Home is where the heart is; at least that's the saying. Home is where you hang your hat - also another saying. I believe that Robert Frost called home the place where they have to take you in. How does that Simeon and Garfunkel song go:

*"Home where my thought's
escaping,
Home where my music's
playing,
Home where my love lies
waiting
Silently for me."*

And, is it any wonder?
Home is that comfort we all long for. And, I'm not sure I

would call it a place. It's a feeling almost, like you know you are there when it happens. Sure, I have a house, but I have lived in many a house. It feels like home because of what I can count upon to be there: the people, the comforts, the little things that make it a place I long to go to after a long day.

Slide: I go to prepare...

It might not seem like it, but in today's Gospel reading, Jesus is essentially giving his disciples red ruby slippers – click your heels together three times and say, "There's no place like home" and there you will be. You have the power already to be at home, you just don't know it, seems to be what Jesus is saying. In my Father's house, there are many dwelling places. I go to prepare it for you and it is through me that you will have this home.

In this, what is known to us today as Jesus' farewell discourse, Jesus says words of promise to his friends

before he is betrayed and handed over to be crucified. No doubt, Jesus can tell that his disciples are deeply anxious about what is happening. They don't fully understand what is about to happen to Jesus, but they feel it. They can tell something is wrong.

Slide: Home is..

So, what does Jesus promise them to comfort them? Home. He tells them of a home that he is giving them and that in that home, there he and the Father is. There is nothing more comforting than the idea of home, at least the home that is a happy place for you – a place where relationships are good and where you have purpose and hope. There is no place like it. And, Jesus wants to give it to his disciples and to us.

Slide: I go to prepare...

Here is the only snag. We tend to only think that this home Jesus is promising to us is the home that is in eternal life, a heavenly

home. This is why we often hear this Gospel reading at funerals as it pertains to the heavenly home, the dwelling places that God gives to those who have died. And, it also is that kind of home. That is not untrue. But, I want to stress here that Jesus isn't simply telling us to wait and long for a heavenly home, that until you get to heaven are you even going to know what home is.

No, Jesus is also promising a dwelling here, now, with him where we are or, rather, an indwelling with him through his Holy Spirit. As we can learn from Dorothy Gale, home is not always a place, somewhere out there. Home is a relationship. And, you know you are home when you get there.

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I was having a conversation with a visitor recently about her and her husband's journey in finding a faith community. Having just moved back to the area after some duration, they

had been wandering around Eau Claire worshipping at area churches to get an idea of what they felt they liked. Not to toot our own horn or anything, but this visitor said to me, "I can't explain it, but when we came to St. John's, it just felt like home."

It felt like home. Not to say other faith communities are not, but God's Holy Spirit, if we are open to it, does lead us to find places of refuge and support, the home we long for. That piece of home where Christ is, is always present with us.

But, we can stray from home. We can leave the comforts, the promises, and the relationship that we have with God and long for that running away somewhere over the rainbow. And, we can find ourselves in places and situations where we don't know how it is we got there, but we are now in a negative, unhealthful, unproductive place in life...

- Perhaps our relationships are not life giving
- Perhaps we have made choices that have caused a negative impact upon ourselves or others
- Perhaps we have neglected our faith life and have forgotten that Jesus is in relationship with us daily

Whatever it is that has taken us away from home, Jesus has promised us that we can always return to it no matter what. He has prepared a place for you.

As the psalmist wrote in today's first reading:

"You need not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day; though thousands fall about you, near you it shall not come. I will raise you up on eagle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of my hand."

In other words, I will give you a home, a dwelling place. There I will be. Do not let your hearts be troubled. I will be with you. Dwell in me.

Slide: Ruby Slippers

At times when I long for home, when I desire to see Jesus present with me, I always go to the sacraments. More and more, especially as I age, Holy Baptism and Holy Communion become for me those pieces of home I can always go back to. The sacraments do lead to a heavenly home and the promises of eternal life, but they are also promises for now, for relationship with the risen Lord during your life to hold you up, comfort you, and sustain you.

Slide: Christ in you

And, although we long for that heavenly home where all the saints gone before us now rest from their labors, we also long for that dwelling place here on earth. Come back to Christ. He will give that sense of

home to you. He has promised his Spirit for you and will always promise to do so. That purpose, meaning, and support is yours in relationship with the living God. Take hold of it now.

Home. Let's close our eyes, click our heels three times and go there now. For, Christ is here, present with us in this house and home, in this worship, in bread and wine, water and word. That is home for now. And, there's no place like it.

Amen.