

“Homesick”

Luke 21:25-36, Psalm 23:4 & 6, & 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Pastor James York

November 28, 2021

Prayer for Understanding God, who speaks a good news language—we admit, listening has never been our greatest gift. We are easily distracted, our minds run a million miles a minute. We doubt your faith in us and take the easy way out when it comes to hope. So today we bow our heads and ask for help. Settle our hearts. Quiet our minds. Steady our breathing. Help us to rest in you. Help us to listen for your good news. Gratefully we pray, amen.

We begin Advent with the “Little Apocalypse” in Luke 21. We remember how far from home we are. The world is not as it should be. Many have lost their physical homes, many feel alone, and many are isolated. Many of us feel as if we are wandering with no clear way forward. This first week speaks to our deep longing—for our home to be made whole, made right, and made well. With deep longing, we watch for God. Thankfully, Jesus has, is, and will always, bring home to our homesick lives.

Home for Jesus is the perfect loving relationship that makes Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, one. God created the cosmos, a home, for everyone and everything. We are far from home, not in a spatial way, rather in a state of brokenness way. Our relationships with each other are often messy, unloving. We sometimes struggle to perceive God’s presence and love. The rhythm of the cosmos has been damaged by greedy, fearful, and hateful choices. One of the opposites of home is death, and all the forms of death such as disease, pain, suffering, injury, grief, loss, diminishing.

In advent, we celebrate that Jesus is bringing home to us. All of us have a longing for home for all our relationships to be loving, to be in harmony with the cosmos, for every moment to expand in joy, peace, wonder, glory, and love. God created the world and us good. All of us have a longing for home, for all our being, thoughts, and actions to all be good, wholesome, and life expanding. All of us have a longing for home to be in loving relationship with those on the other side of the portal of death.

Jesus revealed snippets of home in his healing, sight for the blind, dancing for the crippled, peaceful thoughts for the tormented. Jesus revealed snippets of home in his mending of relationships. Jesus revealed snippets of home in his celebrations, laughing, with the disciples around a fire, enjoying wine at a wedding. Jesus revealed snippets of home in his teachings. Jesus revealed snippets of home by bringing Lazarus back to life from the dead to be united with his family. Jesus revealed snippets of home in his resurrection. Jesus redeems, resurrects, heals, perfects, completes, transforming our current homelessness to eternal home.

Luke begins by describing our homeless situation. **Luke 21:25-26 MSG “It will seem like all hell has broken loose—sun, moon, stars, earth, sea, in an uproar and everyone all over the world in a panic, the wind knocked out of them by the threat of doom, the powers-that-be quaking.** Often scripture has many facets as Luke’s description of homelessness. Cosmic homelessness, stellar death, black holes, destructive storms, plants and animals dying, pollution. Political homelessness oppression, manipulation, gridlock, war. Social homelessness, dysfunction in our families, groups, and organizations. Religious homelessness, being excluded, ignored, or hurt. Physical homelessness, aging, pain, death. Mental homelessness dark thoughts, shame, guilt. Emotional homelessness, fear, anxiety, worry, hate. Expectation homelessness, dashed plans, unachieved goals, shattered dreams. Needs homelessness, lack of food, clothing, shelter. Grief homelessness, loss of any kind, the death of those we love. Situation homelessness when you are slogging through a no good, rotten, miserable situation. Luke is trying to communicate all of this and more, every facet of homelessness in his words. **Luke 21:25-36 MSG “It will seem like all hell has broken loose—sun, moon, stars, earth, sea, in an uproar and everyone all over the world in a panic, the wind knocked out of them by the threat of doom, the powers-that-be quaking. “And then—then!—they will see the Son of Man welcomed in grand style—a glorious welcome! When all this starts to happen, up on your feet. Stand tall with your heads high. Help is on the way!” He told them a story. “Look at a fig tree. Any tree for that matter. When the leaves begin to show, one look tells you that summer is right around the corner. The same here—when you see these things happen, you know God’s kingdom is about here. Don’t brush this off: I am not just saying this for some future generation, but for this one, too—these things will happen. Sky and earth will wear out; my words will not wear out. “But be on your guard. Don’t let the sharp edge of your expectation get dulled by parties and drinking and shopping. Otherwise, that Day is going to take you by complete surprise, spring on you suddenly like a trap, for it is going to come on everyone,**

everywhere, at once. So, whatever you do, don't fall asleep at the wheel. Pray constantly that you will have the strength and wits to make it through everything that is coming and end up on your feet before the Son of Man."

Understanding of this scripture expands when one lets go of time and space. Jesus has already brought home to our ancestors. Jesus is bringing home to us. Jesus will bring home in the future. Advent is an invitation to see, to stand up, to perceive, the many ways God is bringing home to you and the cosmos. Do not ever give up on home for you will enjoy every facet, aspect, and dimension of home.

When everything is falling apart, when your spiritual home feels like it is beyond repair, when your sense of home has vanished Jesus provides home for you. Sometimes it takes time to sense Jesus' presence, to imagine how you will be at home. Perceiving our eternal glorious home gives us the vigor to **"stand tall with our heads high."** Jesus is our firm foundation for our individual spiritual homes and the foundation for the home of the cosmos.

Perceiving home gives us courage to more than survive homelessness, it enables us to engage homelessness. When our homes fall apart, Jesus is with us. Jesus rescues, transforms, and redeems. Jesus resurrects home. Advent is a season to imagine home, to be hopeful. Advent should give us confidence that Jesus will fix every broken home. Advent calls and sends us to partner with God in fixing every home. We guide each other through and beyond the destruction to abundant life. The psalmist puts it this way: **Psalm 23:4 & 6 "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me. Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever."**

Our individual homes are broken, our worldwide home is broken. More brokenness will happen. Jesus will repair, perfect, and glorify every home.

I perceive home through trees. The home of playing in a treehouse, swinging from a tree branch, hiking in the woods, sleeping under a tree. When Leslie and I built a house in Hudson, one of the first things I did was transplant trees from the farm to our yard. Trees open me to other dimensions that are beyond time and space. Trees connect me with God and my family. Trees make me feel safe, loved, and hopeful. Trees help me feel at home.

There is something about trees that unites. All of us are pilgrims. We are border walkers between the created and uncreated, time and eternity, space and infinity, matter and spirit, homesickness and hope, home is already here, and home is not yet. Trees help me find a rhythm between these dimensions, to harmonize them, to stand tall in the chaos of the moment sustained by eternal love. Knowing that in the most devastating moments of our lives that God is with us, loving us, redeeming us, sets us free to relate to our homelessness from the transcendent home, the image of home that is the center of our being. We are built with love that brings all together. Luke explains our border walking this way. When it seems all hell has broken loose, when sun, moon, stars, earth, sea are in an uproar and everyone all over the world is in a panic, wind knocked out of us by threat of doom, the powers that be shaking. We will see Jesus. We will stand tall with our heads high. Help is on the way.

Sanctified art explains that during Advent, we journey through scriptures and rituals that are tender, heavy with emotion, and vulnerable. We carry the memories and truths of this season close to our hearts. Close to home acknowledges the "already but not yet" tension of our faith: Emmanuel is with us, and yet, God's promised day—our everlasting home—is not fully realized. It names our deep longing for eternal, perfect glorious home. John the Baptist prophesies about the One who is to come but reminds us that we are still wandering far from God's promised day; his message hits close to home, especially for those experiencing inequity and oppression. After receiving the angel's news, Mary retreats to Elizabeth's home, seeking refuge and safety. Christ is born in the midst of a journey home, in a crowded dwelling amidst livestock and shepherds alike. The Magi travel far from home to pay homage to Christ, and, having been warned in a dream, they avoid Herod by traveling home another way. In these scriptures, home is both physical and metaphorical, something we seek and something we are called to build. Ultimately, God is our home. God draws near and makes a home on earth—sacred ground is all around us. Close to home also names the pain many of us will carry into this season. The holidays can poke at our grief. Many will be missing loved ones lost to sickness and tragedy. The traumas of the pandemic will still be with us. Many will have lost homes—due to natural disasters, economic hardship, and unjust policies. Many do not feel safe in their own homes due to poor living conditions or harmful family dynamics. Many feel alone and isolated at home. Churches are discerning transitions with their physical buildings; many of our spiritual homes are changing. This Advent, may we be comforted by the One who dwells intimately with us. May we expand safety and sanctuary for everyone wandering far from home. May we come home, wherever home is found—to live fully with joy, hope, and courage.

Pastor Lauren Wright Pittman writes: "I have such a hard time saying goodbye to my family after a gathering. The feeling is deep in my gut; it is a turning of my stomach and an aching in my chest. There is this part of me that never wants to leave, but as I journey away, the unease shifts to eagerness as I anticipate returning to the home I have created with my partner. I have many places and people in my life that I call home. Within me there is tugging and pulling, these divergent homesicknesses that leave me never really feeling fully at home. I may feel close to home, but not quite there.

It is within this kind of in between that we find ourselves during the Advent season. God has come close, and yet we yearn for God to do so again. This Advent season, may we acknowledge our homesicknesses, while marveling at the closeness of God—the home already within each of us.”

Pastor Sarah Are Speed writes: “The last hour of a road trip is always the hardest. You think to yourself: ‘This is the home stretch! We are almost there! We have almost made it!’ But then the road continues, and we are led to ask the inevitable question, ‘Are we there yet?’ Advent feels a little like the last hour of a road trip. We are close to home. God is coming. We can feel it in our bones—something is about to change. During Advent, we get a glimpse of a world saturated with peace, hope, love, and joy. During Advent, we get a glimpse of a world with angel choruses. During Advent, we get a glimpse of a world where an unmarried teenage girl could bear God’s son, and a group of outcast shepherds might be invited to see it. So, this Advent, I hope you will journey with us as we take steps to move closer to the home God envisions for us—a home saturated with hope, peace, love, and joy. Are we there yet? No. But with God’s help, we can get closer every day.””

A homesick Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about the home of joy, completeness, and overflowing love.
1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 NLT “How we thank God for you! Because of you we have great joy as we enter God’s presence. Night and day we pray earnestly for you, asking God to let us see you again to fill the gaps in your faith. May God and our Lord Jesus bring us to you very soon. And may the Lord make your love for one another and for all people grow and overflow, just as our love for you overflows. May God, as a result, make your hearts strong, blameless, and holy as you stand before God when our Lord Jesus comes again with all God’s holy people. Amen. Jesus is bringing home to you.

Homesick
By Pastor Sarah Are Speed

How do you describe homesickness to a child?
You don’t.
They know.
Children know the feeling of being away from home.
It’s fear, dipped in loneliness,
that “What if I’ve been forgotten?” sonnet,
or the “What if I can’t go back?” refrain.
Even a healthy, scrubbed-clean, showered-with-love child knows the longing of home.
But if I had to.
If I had to describe that aching feeling, I would say:
“Homesickness is when longing and grief wrap themselves around you like a blanket.
It’s the door to comfort thrown open.
It’s an eye on the horizon for what could be and the only way out is to keep walking,
to keep dreaming,
to keep looking
for signs that will point you back home.”
And if you tell that to a child, you just may realize that a part of your spirit
has shoes on
and has always been walking,
always been dreaming,
always been looking for the home that could be.
The door to comfort has been blown open.
Tell God I’m homesick.
I’m on my way.
Amen