

(For Monday, March 27, 2017) **Have you come home?**

“But [people shall say] ‘As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.’ For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their fathers.” (Jer.16:15-ESV)

You’ve certainly heard the welcome “Make yourself at home.” You’ve probably also heard people say, “Once you leave, you can never really go home again.” “Home” seems to be a dearly held place deeply etched into the human psyche. In a spiritual sense, this “home hunger” may be the soul’s profound yearning to return the presence of its Creator. When a Christian man or woman is able to persist in a life-style of sanctification – that is a life committed to living in the very center of God’s will for him or her – that believer begins to experience a place of quiet peace that both resonates with and fulfills so much of what we yearn for.

What about you? Have you found your spiritual place of rest? In your life, are you at home with God?

(For Tuesday, March 28, 2017) **Do you bear the hallmarks of God’s child?**

“Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name.” (Ps.97:12-ESV)

Why were so many of the people drawn to the early Christian church? It wasn’t study of the Bible. The New Testament wouldn’t be definitively canonized until sometime in the 4th century. And there is no indication that a “Second Pentecost” occurred, manifesting God’s presence so powerfully through the Holy Spirit’s tongues of fire, resulting in the conversion of thousands in a single day. (See Acts 2:41) Yet by 331 AD, when the Constantine finally commissioned the Christian Bible for the Church in Constantinople, 10% of the Greco-Roman were already Christian.* What was it that made the Church grow like wildfire in its first three centuries? I believe it was the way these early Christians lived their lives, in constant joy and gratitude for their daily blessings from God. Maybe that’s why the Apostle Paul insists that we “give thanks in all circumstances,” (1Thes.5:18) and “rejoice, rejoice, again I say rejoice.” (Phil.4:4)

What about you? Do you bear the hallmarks of joy and thanksgiving that clearly mark you as God’s own?

*According to the Church Historian Dr. Kate Cooper, from her keynote at the Spring Clergy Meeting, Episcopal Diocese of Florida, March 2-3, 2017

(Office Memo for Wednesday, March 29, 2017) **Have you let your past be healed?**

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Rom.8:1-ESV)

In this conclusion, Paul summarizes most of what he’s formulated in the previous 5 chapters of *Romans*. The verse demonstrates how we are immediately (“now”) free to live an abundant life in Christ. We need wait no longer for this fulfilling abundance. But there’s a past dimension here too. The righteousness imputed to us by Jesus is also a fulfillment of God’s prophetic instruction to the Children of Israel, when he said to us through them, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” (Lev.19.2, 20:26) The holiness that The Law could never provide is now available to all in the precious blood of The Lamb of God. And it is holiness which cancels the terrible indebtedness of our past sins, for although we are convicted, we are free from condemnation.

Have you let your past be healed? Or are you still carrying with you the crushing weight of shame?

(Office Memo for Thursday, March 30, 2017) **Have you gotten over arguing with God?**

“Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.” (Jn.6:43b-44, ESV)

Jesus' warning not to grumble followed directly by his statement that salvation comes only by the initiation of God is important. The Christian world today is woefully divided among countless denominations and creeds. And you will often hear fiery sermons angrily proclaiming that those who do not embrace a particular view of worship are wrong. But these verses indicate that the only way salvation can arrive is for God to call somebody to him. So isn't it more important to ensure that those who we are trying to win for Christ are carefully listening for his tender call on their lives, rather than ranting insistently about the righteousness of one particular view of the Christian faith? I honestly believe that nobody has ever been argued into heaven.

And what about you? Are you still arguing with God about some presumed slight? Is it time you simply were quiet and listened for his still small voice calling you home?

(Office Memo for Friday, March 31, 2017) **Are you just snacking on God?**

“Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.” (Jn.6:56, ESV)

The word “feed” is used by farmers to describe an almost ritualistic occurrence. Since livestock must eat on a daily basis in order to stay healthy, the farmer “feeds” his animals every day (and in some cases both morning and evening). Jesus' use of this concept seems intentional. And the result of this regular consuming of the person of The Lord results in the believer's “abiding” in Christ, and the Lord “abiding” in him/her. It's a state-of-being which is both constant and completing, this “abiding” in The Lord. In conclusion, it would seem that a casual and irregular participation in Jesus may result in a kind of “fire-insurance” against the calamities of this world and the next. But to truly receive the abundant life God desires for all his children, we need to be deeply nurtured by him each day. Then we can truly abide in his infinite peace.

Is your nourishment of the Word and Sacraments regular enough for you to dwell in God's peace?