

God Dwells Among Us And Knows us by Name

Texts: Acts 16:9-15

Rev. 21:10, 22-22:5 (Series C, 6th Sunday after Easter) Ps. 67

John 14:23-29

Jesus answered, "Those who love me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and my Father and I will come to them and live with them."

Prayer

How often are you and I identified with a number? At the bank you have account numbers, PIN numbers to access your accounts, and credit card numbers. The taxation department identifies you by your Tax File Number. You have a Medicare number.

The electricity, Costco and telephone companies give you a customer number that is displayed on the top of your bills, right! When you go to the passport office you are required to pick up a number and will be served when your number is called, and we could go on.

When I am pulled over by a police officer for a traffic violation, the police officer is interested in numbers – my license number, my registration number, Insurance number, and ... the number on the radar gun indicating how fast you were travelling.

Numbers are so impersonal. Isn't it nice when someone remembers our name, or when we are known by name rather than by a customer account number? Most of all isn't it wonderful that we have a God who knows us by our personal name!

We read and hear stories of children who have a home that is sheer hell. For them, home is a place of sorrow, insecurity, hurt, pain and abuse. For some, home is the place where they suffer to the point of death. Home! What is a home?

A home is a place of joy, security, comfort and love. For a child, home is a safe place; it's the place where they grow and learn; it's where they are loved and in return give love. Home is the place we like to be; the place we like to come 'home' to. It's our resting place after a hard day. Home is the place where we live.

Jesus and his disciples are sharing together a meal on the day before his death. Jesus tells them that he will soon go away. They ask him if they can go with him, but Jesus replies, *"You cannot go where I am going"* (13:33). *"But we will be left alone,"* the disciples replied.

"When I go, you will not be left alone". And then Jesus goes on to assure his disciples, *"Those who love me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and my Father and I will come to them and live with them."* The words *"My Father and I will come and live with them"* can also be translated as, *"We will make our home with them"*

The disciples were living in a world, just like ours that was hostile to the grace and love of God. Thus, Home with God is the place of shelter and protection; being nurtured and comforted. Home with God is being able to retreat from the day's problems and worries; being loved in spite of all our weaknesses.

The picture of being at home with God would have been particularly encouraging and strengthening for the disciples when they were anxious and stressed about how they would face so much hostility in the world. Jesus is also saying to us, to you, to me *"We will come and make our home with you"*. He is making us a very wonderful promise. A promise we can take to heart.

He is promising to be present with us; to live with us and provide for our needs; as we journey through this life. As we live in this world, he is dwelling with us; we are able to enjoy his closeness in the same way that he is close to the Father.

And today we hear Jesus say to us, *"We will come and make our home with you"*. By the way, this isn't a new idea that God makes his home with us. The Old Testament is full of pictures, images describing God as our dwelling place (*our home*), or God's people living in the house of the Lord.

Psalms 27 says, *"One thing that I ask of the Lord, ... that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. For in the day of trouble, he will keep me safe in his dwelling"* (v 4,5). And Psalm 90:1, *"Lord you have been our dwelling place (our home) through all generations"*

In the midst of our limited, insecure world; Jesus is our source of true security. It can be said that he gives us small portions of eternity right now, as we journey through this life. He gives us the physical as well as the spiritual strength to meet the challenges that confront us.

He gives us rest when we are weary of life so that we can experience the freshness and newness of another day. He is our refuge when the world's pain, problems and demands are closing in on us.

Jesus then adds to this picture of home by saying that the Father will send a *Helper, a Counsellor*, namely *the Holy Spirit*. He will teach us what Jesus has said; he will nurture our faith and trust; and he will help us *remember* that we belong to God, we are members of his household, and that we are special.

Then he goes on to say, "*Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid.*" Christ's peace is a quiet state of the heart, which is not affected by the outward circumstances, and which outward conflicts cannot destroy.

The peace that Christ gives comes from knowing that whatever may happen, you and I have a Saviour who will never forsake us. Even in the face of our worst sin, he will not forsake us. Even when things turn out bad, we are at peace, Jesus is there, he will never leave us.

Sometimes peace is described as the absence of *conflict, fear, trouble and suffering*. Peace is more than the absence of something. Peace, true peace, is the presence of someone – and that someone is Jesus. He has come to make his home with us and that brings true peace into our lives.

His love, forgiveness, protection, help, comfort – brings the peace we so much need in our troubled life. Peace is knowing that Jesus will stand by us and that *nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39)*, according to St. Paul.

All this builds up to a wonderful picture of being at home – home with God; secure and safe, nurtured and cared for. God makes a home within our lives—a home of love, security, joy, peace, confidence and hope. <3>

But there is a danger I must admit, that this warm cosy picture will send us all to sleep. Instead of getting out there and showing our love, by sharing our faith, using our abilities to serve God and our fellow humanity, helping in the many tasks that arise in a congregation such as ours, the temptation is there, to feel so comfortable and secure at home with God, that we see no reason to do anything else.

When that happens, this kind of inactivity is the greatest danger that faces the Christian church today. It is this kind of inactivity that has caused the demise of many congregations and is always a threat to this very congregation.

The most often quoted part is when Jesus says, *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you* which is often used in liturgical celebrations. But for me in this reading, perhaps in view of the times in which we live, what stood out for me were the next two sentences: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled; and do not be afraid.”*

And while mine is and I am, I realize that the essence of my journey in faith is indeed to *keep* the words of Jesus, accept the peace he gives, and *not give* to others as *the world gives* in its *anger, greed, complacency, and general self-interest.*

The church is the place where we are made to feel at peace and loved and forgiven, but God gives us that peace and love to enable us to cope with the challenges of doing his work, speaking his Word, loving others, helping in the Church or whatever may come our way.

His peace and love are not given to send us to sleep, but to send us out to do his work. His peace and love are given to move us to pass on that same peace and love to others. He gives us security in his home so that we can make a difference in the world and in the church, and in the lives of others.

I'm not called to live on a mountain seeking only *my* inner peace, ignoring all the ceaseless realities ~ good, bad, or indifferent ~ of this life. I am called to be faithful to the words of Christ. It won't make all trouble and fear go away, but it will lighten my soul and guide me to give out the peace of Jesus from within myself.

The New Jerusalem, St. Ansgar is a community of faith, a home that is loving, where you are known by your name and not a number. *Home in Christ is peace. God dwelling among us.*

We have a Saviour who has died for us, who gave his life to forgive us, who has claimed us as members of his own family, in baptism God calls each of us by name and not a number. He has given us peace that surpasses all human understanding.

An old man who had suffered a great deal in his life wrote this just before his death, *"When I look back upon the 70 years of my life, I see quite clearly that I owe my present inner happiness, my peace, and my joy essentially to one fact: I am certain that I am infinitely loved by God."*

As we celebrate the Lord's Supper, Eucharist (means thanksgiving) this morning, may we, like this man, know the peace and presence of God in our lives. Let us hold dear the words of Jesus,

"Do not let your hearts be trouble and upset; do not be afraid. ...

My Father loves you, and we will come to you and make our home with you."

"And I hope you want to come to Where you are known by your name"

Amen.

Prayer concerns: *Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Shirley Walker, Hanne Bourgeois, Bettina Bourgeois, Sven Berg, Astrid Hylland, Ellen Eriksen, Euclide & Ellen Dahal-Lanteigne, Karen Abazio, Wilhelmina Tiemersma, Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Soo Young, Shirley Walker, Pastor Timothy, Sharon Nielson (in Herbert, Sask.) the dire tension between Russia and Ukraine, Protectors at various places in Canada, Covid -19 patients, essential and Frontline workers, Note: of thanks to God as the Covid-19 virus is easing off and more restrictions are being lifted, and finally Families of departed souls in recent weeks and months.*

Prayer: Holy Christ, Lord of Glory and Light, heal us as we travel the river of this life toward eternity with You. By our love we'll keep Your words and not give to the world as it gives, but offer Your deep, abiding peace to all we meet. We ask through the Holy Spirit, our Advocate; and the Infinite Almighty, who together with You are One God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:

- **Glorious Things of You Are Spoken # 647**
- **Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling # 582**
- **Jesus Shall Reign # 343**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Bjorg Berg, & Johannes Eidnes

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

n/a

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you

May 22, 2022