

## “The Homemaker”

A sermon for the Sixth Sunday of Easter (Mother’s Day), May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
at Sts. Peter and Paul Lutheran Church, Riverside, Illinois  
Acts 16:9-15; Revelation 21:10, 22—22:5; John 14:23-29

*Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you; so lead us by your Spirit that in this life we may live to your glory and in the life to come enjoy you for ever; through Jesus Christ our Lord who is alive with with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. Amen.*

*Home Alone.* It was the name of a popular, Christmastime film some years ago about a blundering family that takes off to Paris on Christmas vacation while accidentally leaving their eight year-old son, Kevin, at *home alone!* Somewhere over the mid-Atlantic, aboard a Concorde supersonic jet, the boy’s mother frantically realizes that she and the family have forgotten their youngest child back in Chicago. At first, you may remember, Kevin didn’t mind being *home alone*, having a large pizza all to himself, jumping freely on his parents’ bed, making a big mess of the entire house. And the boy does pretty well for himself until he discovers two burglars who are about to rob his house on Christmas Eve. The film is basically about how Kevin humorously outwits the inept intruders named Harry and Marv, and because the film is a comedy, and we know that everything will turn out alright in the end, we don’t stop to ask ourselves the question how we might deal with being *home alone*, which is really to ask, how we would cope with being *homeless*.

It all begins with this question. As Jesus is saying goodbye to his disciples (his students, his friends, his family) one of them raises his hand and asks, “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world? . . . How will we see you when you are no longer with us? How are we to cope with being *home alone*? Maybe that’s our question, too. I suppose one of the reasons why we come to church on Sunday mornings, and not just Christmas, Mother’s Day and Easter (They’re known as the “CME” Christians.), is because we, too, have a sense for being left *home alone*, and sometimes we can feel very much as though we have even been left homeless. To be home-alone is to be home-less.

“A house is not a home.” Dionne Warwick sang it a long, long time ago: “A house is not a home when there’s no one there to hold you tight, and no one there you can kiss goodnight.” We live in an age of homelessness; and I’m not speaking of people who are thrust onto the streets and made to spend winter nights in church fellowship halls. I’m talking about us. So many of us literally spend our entire week at *home alone* with few, if any, others coming and going in our lives. Some of us are very lonesome even though we are surrounded by people everywhere we turn. Others of us are left *home alone* to grieve the loss of dear ones we have loved so deeply for decades of our lives. Still others recognize the lengthening shadows of loneliness as aging parents pass away and as grown children graduate to move away. I think loneliness—call it social homelessness—is one of the most prevalent, painful maladies of this age of isolation. And many of us come here to church because we need a home where we are loved, and we need a family who will not leave us orphaned.

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘See, the *home of God* is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes.’” Isn’t this what happens in homes that are more than places to crash overnight and refuel for the next workday? Homes, as the Sunday school children reminded me this morning, are places that are safe, where we are close to each other, where we can be ourselves with one another, where people teach us things, and where someone will wipe away the tears from our eyes. I suppose we’re all trying to find such a home where we are loved and valued, disciplined and encouraged, and “where everybody knows your name.” And if there are people here this morning whose names you don’t know, introduce yourselves, and call them by name next time you see them, because here, in this home, as we used to hear on *Cheers*, “everybody knows your name.”

Years ago, Geraldine Page won an Academy Award for her role as an elderly woman trying to recapture her home in *The Trip to Bountiful*. I love that film, and watching it would be a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon with your mother. Garrison Keillor rose to prominence by speaking to us every Saturday evening about our longing for the lost home of Lake Wobegon, “the little town that time forgot.” Phil Collins sang about “taking me home” to a place I can no longer remember but which I know is there. You see, our feeling of homelessness surely

testifies that there must be a home for us somewhere even if we don't know just where it is anymore.

As a very young child, I vividly remember that on Saturdays as my parents were preparing to go out for the evening I would quiz my Mom with questions like, "Where are you and Dad going?" and "Who are you going with?" Then, I'd work my way up to ask, "How long you gonna be gone?" and "Who's gonna to stay with us?" And finally I'd land the clincher, "Will you be home before bedtime?" (None of us wants to spend the night alone.) And Mom would patiently answer my questions, and then she'd say something like, "When we come in tonight, I'll come to your room and give you a kiss goodnight, and I'll see you in the morning. Your sisters will be staying with you!" That was all I needed—the assurance that I would not be *home alone* and the promise that Mom and Dad would be back, whether I was conscious of it or not, and that I'd see them in the morning.

Jesus promises that he will be back and will see us in the morning. In the meantime, he will send the Holy Spirit, the helper, the comforter, the advocate, the one who will walk alongside us, recalling everything that Jesus said to us, and giving us sisters and brothers in Mother Church who will communicate his presence to us while he is away.

Of course, we know that even the deepest relationships begin to fade. Ironically, it is especially true in springtime as school years draw to a close. Every spring of late, for me, at least, I watch them at graduation, giving each other hugs and saying things like, "Oh sure, we'll keep in touch. Text me sometime this summer; we'll get together before I head off to Dartmouth. And, of course, we'll be seeing each other for all the holidays, Thanksgiving, Christmas, who knows, maybe even RB's Homecoming. For sure!"

Well, I hate to tell you this, but it doesn't happen. It's been said that nothing withstands the ravages of time, the desolation of distance. Let them leave us, and we lose them. So, when Jesus announces to his disciples, "I am going to leave you now," they're distraught, desolate, to say the least. But Jesus assures us, "I will not leave you desolate. . . My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make *our home* with them. . . I'll send you the helper, the Holy Spirit who will walk alongside you, who will 'remind you of all that I have said to you.'"

You see, we don't want just words. We need a body walking alongside us. We want someone with some skin on. So, Jesus says, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make *our home* with them." God will move right in the house with us if we choose to live there with him by embodying his love for the world.

The Revelation of John the Seer is a powerful testimony that in the midst of our fear, anxiety and distress, God moves right in to our earthly home with us, "And I saw the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven adorned as a bride for her husband." The Revelation assures us that good overcomes evil, love overcomes hate, hope overcomes despair, and life overcomes death, for "I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, '*See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away. . .*'"

Then the story is told in the book of Acts today about a prominent business woman and worshiper of God named Lydia whose heart God opened "to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and *stay at my home.*'" So Lydia becomes the first mother of the church at Philippi. "I will not leave you like orphans, bereft of their mothers," Jesus assures his brothers and sisters, "but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you . . . This One will walk beside you."

"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live."

"Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you; so lead us by your Spirit that in this life we may live to your glory and in the life to come enjoy you for ever. . ."