

Always at Home with Jesus

John 14:1-14

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“I want you home before midnight, because nothing after midnight needs your presence, all you get after midnight is trouble.”

I can't tell you how many times I drove from the neighborhoods in Littleton where all my friends lived, in my 1974 Opel Sport wagon, with that phrase, told to me by my father, ringing in my ears.

And I would honestly think about it all the way home. I would look about the streets and see next to nobody out. I could see that all the restaurants, VHS rental stores, and coin operated video game parlors; were closed for business.

There weren't any bars on my drive home via Dry Creek Road, so all I saw was the occasional cool Teenagers with Monster cars drag racing or possibly just heading home like I was.

Either way, I totally agreed with my dad. There just wasn't anything to do after midnight in our unincorporated part of the county, and I might as well be home, because anything else was just cause for trouble.

Then, as if confirming the wisdom of my mom and dad, the next Monday I would find out just what kind of trouble my classmates were getting into after midnight.

Girls were picked up by their parents and admonished harshly by the police for illegal drinking. Boys were getting bailed out of jail for illegal drag racing and sometimes even drugs.

But, this was a well to do community. And while there were some divorced parent families, the majority were two parent church going families that would go pick up their kids at student detention, pick them up at the parties when they drank too much, because understanding police wouldn't jail them if their parents would just come pick them up.

In other words, even though they were in trouble, they at least had a place to call home, and their parents would deal with it the next day.

And did they ever! Cars would be taken away, freedom restricted, and Prom or Homecoming was out of the question for many. But the community still loved their wayward kids, most remembered they were kids once too, and while punishment was swift and severe, it was to teach them a lesson so that they didn't make even more devastating decisions later.

I was careful, because mom and dad made it clear that if you ever find yourself in jail, you're gonna spend the night there, oh we'll come get ya, but we're not losing a night of sleep over it.

So, when Monday came, we found out who got in trouble and what that meant for them, punishment wise; for the foreseeable future. For the most part, recoverable and manageable.

But occasionally, there would be the trouble I could barely conceive of. Kids running away from home, kids engaging in extreme vandalism and even violence with each other, and the most devastating of all, attempted and sometimes even successful suicides.

I realized right then and there, that was real trouble, and I was also able to correlate that with them not having a home they felt welcome in anymore.

But our God cares about them, and that is why He speaks so clearly today about trouble and home! But the last thing He wants for His dear children is *trouble in the home*.

When Jesus starts out today saying, "let not your hearts be troubled..." He is not quoting Sean Hannity.

Jesus is not telling us to calm down and don't get so upset, which usually just makes everyone more upset when you tell them to settle down.

He is not suggesting you should walk around like a passive Christian at peace and happy all the time.

Jesus is speaking to us with words of comfort that He empathizes with our troubles, He knows exactly what we are going through, and He offers real homebound hope amid it all.

Jesus speaks of trouble today just like He Himself experienced in John 11:33 when Mary's brother, Lazarus, died and He encountered her weeping "...He was deeply moved in His spirit and greatly *troubled*."

Our Lord understands our real troubles, even the ones we bring upon ourselves, because even though our troubles caused His troubles leading to His crucifixion, He made our troubles His' own so we would not suffer eternally for them.

That's what Jesus means when He says, "let not your hearts be troubled," because He took our troubles to the cross, and our hearts were cleansed by His blood and no longer in trouble.

Then, immediately, Jesus tells us about *our home* with Him.

Ahh, all the ways we look at home! Whether it's a hometown, the home we grew up in or just the home we endeavor everyday to make our families comfortable in.

It has such a variety of expressions in our culture, it's hard to nail down what that means for everyone.

Oh, it has been said home is where the heart is, but also written you can't go home again. You can tell someone to get your house in order, but never forget your home free! You can have your home away from home and make yourself at home, but that likely will never let you forget home sweet home.

Now I can go all day with these expressions, and I am sure some of you are thinking right now, 'Something tells me you would', but that would miss the point of what Jesus is talking about today, and He is speaking from the point of view of a homeless person Himself.

After all Jesus, Himself said in Matthew 8:20, "...Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no where to lay His head!"

And for those that suggest, "surely Joseph and Mary would have made sure that their home would be welcome to Jesus? Right?"

Well, we have no indication from Scripture that Jesus ever rested there, and He himself said of his hometown of Nazareth after being rejected in His synagogue in Luke 4:24, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown."

Jesus assuring us of our home, has no home here on earth, save the tomb He was laid in after His death, and that was as temporary of a home as there ever was, for our Lord.

For Jesus, the way home was as important as the home itself.

Ya know, Google and Map Quest have really ruined this world. Don't get me wrong, I am utterly and totally dependent on my google maps. It ensures I avoid traffic; it makes sure I get to the right place on time, and it has made my visits much more manageable and efficient over the years. Quite frankly I would never want to live without it if I didn't have to.

But, it has done more damage to our culture than you will ever even miss.

First, it has destroyed the art of explaining where you live and how to get there to your friends.

Neighborhood landmarks, paying attention to your surroundings, and generally learning all about the area your friends live in.

You no longer get to tell people to, “take a left at the two-story colonial style house that still has a massive plastic pumpkin mounted on the chimney that has been there ever since Halloween with no hope of ever being taken down, you can’t miss it!”

Oh, my beloved members that are older try to tell me these detailed stories, but because I know google will take me right to their front door, I cut them off in the interest of time.

That’s another thing, nobody travels anywhere in about “an amount” of time. We don’t get to talk about how far or near we live and how that affects our participation in church, community, or other events. We don’t get to hear about how inconvenient or wonderful living off the beaten path is.

And finally, we have no sense of North or South or East or West. Unless we know where 19 is in any given neighborhood, we have no clue which way North is.

When I lived in Denver, Colorado; the only way we could tell, was by facing the mountains and we always knew the North was to the right!

But thanks to Google, and Garmin, that’s completely irrelevant!

It wasn’t always that way. In fact, when I first started visiting shut ins in Memphis TN, my bishop gave me the best gift ever, a spiral bound map!

This was amazing in its day. He could give me a list of shut ins with their address and I could look up every street in Memphis and guide myself to their homes with no help from anyone.

Now I will admit it took almost twice as long as it does today for the same amount of shut ins for the first 2-3 months, but shortly after that I had every home’s location memorized and barely looked at the map at all.

But this process helped me find my barber shop, where to get groceries and even helped me find the studio, Elvis Presley; recorded his first album in!

All because I had to look for the streets, learn North and South everywhere in the city. If there was a way to go, I knew it and could detail it instantly.

Now I couldn't even tell you the streets to get to my house once you're off Grove Street or Key Ave. When I see police reports about crime in the community, I have no idea how close that is to my house! And it's all because I never had to learn the streets, because google did all the thinking. And even though I don't let google voice command me anymore, I do know where I am going, it's still ringing in my ears subconsciously as I mindlessly drive from point A to Point B never even thinking about the way I am going.

Be honest, how many times have you driven to work or driven to your friend's house and when you got there you couldn't even remember what the drive was like to get there?

Beware my dear brothers and sisters how Satan desires to lull you into *spiritual travel* that is little mindful of the way you should go, that matters as much if not more than where you are going.

For our Spiritual Journey of Life is in, with, and because of Jesus. And it is not just to get home, but to be at home with our friends in Jesus too.

It's to remember that the way of Jesus was concerned for the poor, the sick, the lonely, the widowed and the orphaned. The way of Jesus gathered His people together as often as they could, so they would encourage each other; in the Way that walks with Jesus empowered by His Holy Spirit.

Because His way is the homeless way, so we too recognize that the present offerings and permanence of this world means little whence compared to the joyful journey we have away from our homes that seek keep us here and away from Christ.

Because our Home is always with Jesus wherever He may lead us and bring us to be with Him.

AMEN

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