

Coming Back Home

Jeremiah 31:7-9 Ephesians 1:3-6

In today's Old Testament reading, we read Jeremiah's words to the people of God. They are words to a people in exile. The people of Judah had been conquered many years prior and as was the fashion in those times, many of them were sent into exile. Forced to leave their homes and the land God had given to them, they languished in a foreign land. But the prophet Jeremiah speaks words of hope, great hope to the people. "Sing aloud," he says. For God is going to bring everyone back. Everyone, the blind, the lame, those even in the midst of childbirth will come back together as a great company from the ends of the earth. No one is to be left behind. Everyone is coming home together. What a vision Jeremiah gives us for God's inclusion of each of us in this great homecoming parade.

Our reading from Ephesians reinforces this great inclusion. Oh, Paul challenges us to be a people set apart "holy and blameless", but he then tells us that we live that way only because we have been adopted by God. We have been made a part of God's family. We enter the household of God through the amazing grace bestowed on us in the Beloved. What a beautiful image it is to be gathered up in grace...

Home is a powerful place for our lives. Home is where we can be ourselves. Home is where we are loved and accepted for who we are. As Christians it is such a powerful image that we refer to our death as going home to God. I believe that God also wants us - each of us to have a sense of home, here on this earth. Today, I would like to share with you a brief guided meditation about coming home. In a moment I am going to ask you to close your eyes. Before I do that I want to tell you about the Sunday School teacher that was sending her class back to worship after the lesson. The teacher asked, "Now why do we need to keep quiet in church?" One student knew the answer right away. "Because there are people sleeping." she said. Well, though there is a risk of that, I hope you find this a good exercise of feeling a part of God's family. As we begin our meditation I invite you to take a few deep breaths and close your eyes....

What place comes first to your mind when you hear the word "home?"...

See that place in your mind.....

Now imagine a huge party there with many people.. anyone you want..

living or dead.. People that make you feel at home.....

Is there someone there to whom you would like to talk? What do you say to them? What do they say to you? As you begin to wrap up this conversation, you look in the middle of the room and see Jesus there talking with everyone there. Laughing.....

Suddenly Jesus turns to you and a smile comes on his face.....

He invites you to come sit next to him.. As you sit he says, "I'm so glad you're here!"

He then looks you in the eye and says, "How are you? How can I help you?"

There in your home, surrounded by those who love you best, Jesus wants to care for you.. support you..... What do you say to him?

After you talk a while, Jesus holds out his hands to you..... looks you in the eye, calls you by name and says with compassion, you are my family.... You are a child of the Creator. and Jesus says what he will do to lift you up.... How does that sound? He asks? And you can tell him honestly. ...

You notice people are gathering up and it is time to go. Say goodbye to Jesus and anyone else you need to connect with before you go.

Remembering that you can return to this place and these people anytime.... Go out the door now and offer your last goodbye. Take a deep breath and slowly open your eyes.

Remember you are a part of God's family, and God wants you to be at home - a place where you are completely loved and accepted for who you are. A place where you will rise up to be your very best self – where with your sisters and brothers from around the world, you do your part as the Body of Christ. In 2015 let us invite all to come home to the Family of God. AMEN