

WHERE IS HOME?



**Better is one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere;
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of the wicked. (Psalm 84:10)**

We think home is the house where we live, or the family with whom we live. We think home is where we were born or where our friends are or where our roots are. We think of home as an address, a name on a mailbox, a favorite chair and the voices of our spouse, our kids, our parents.

Or home is an ideal. For some of us it's a place longed for, but never experienced. We imagine that one day we'll find a place where we always belong, where we're appreciated and loved and valued. We imagine a place of ultimate security that is out there somewhere waiting for us, and we think of life as one long quest for that place.

However, I suggest we need a clearer picture of home in our minds.

I'm one of the blessed who has a place to call home and who feels loved and valued and safe there. But there's a danger in that, too, a curse that is the flip-side of that blessing. It's all too easy to feel so at-home in the place I call home that I forget where home really is. It's all too easy to forget that there is nothing and no one in this world that can create a permanent home for me. The life we live here is all about change: aging parents and growing children, birth and death, lost jobs and promotions. Financial fortunes ebb and flow. Sin and death intrude even into the places we call home.

And still, as believers, we continue to attempt to make our homes in a place that can never be home for us permanently. We put down roots in a place we know good and well we won't be for very long. We have a remarkable ability to convince ourselves that this world can and should be our homes and we go to great lengths to maintain the illusion that this is where we belong. We redecorate. We work for career advancement and larger paychecks and better benefits. We fall in love and marry and divorce and fall in love again. We buy new houses, new cars, new toys, new clothes. And we do it all, often, for one purpose: to convince ourselves that we're at home. To make this world seem a little more like home.

Don't misunderstand, now. There are some good things in this world. There are people we love and things we enjoy doing. There's beauty and joy and goodness; this world still bears its Creator's fingerprints, after all. I don't think we should reject the wonder of God's creation, or completely look beyond the world. It's a nice place to visit, and the Lord has something for us all to do here. But as we live here and work here and raise families here, as we invest and save and prepare for retirement, as we meet our responsibilities and enjoy our hobbies and enjoy music and walk on beaches and go to football games – as we go about life in this world, we must remember something very important. Something fundamental.

This is not home.

No amount of redecorating will make it home. Nothing we can buy, or achieve, or attain, or earn, or find can make it home. If we make this world our home we will always be disappointed.

Sooner or later we will be forced to acknowledge that what we wanted to be our home wasn't at all.

The Bible tells the story of people who more often than not kept their eyes on that ball. Not always; the best of us now and then forget that this world isn't home. But the true people of God are those who have pretty much realized that there is no place to call home in this world. They "accept the fact that they [are] transients in this world."

Transients. How do you like that word? Makes you think of ratty hotels, shady people, and gritty lives, doesn't it? Good. Transients are exactly what we are: just passing through, happy with food and shelter but not intending to make ourselves at home. Until we have that outlook, until we understand that the trappings of home that this life offers are temporary and illusory, we won't live with the proper perspective. We'll put down roots and get comfortable and think all is well until something – death, sickness, divorce, bankruptcy, layoffs, family trouble – comes along and ends the charade.

Instead, Jesus calls us to live with a vision of a home that's too big to be contained by this world. He calls us to be homesick for the place He has gone to prepare for us and anxious for the day He comes to take us there. He calls us to see beyond the pull and responsibility and demands of this world to the promise of God's kingdom. He calls us to look always for our true home and live as if that's the greater reality. Because it is. It really is.

Let the promise of a home better than this one be your pulse, your driving force. Let it bring a dose of reality to all the false urgency and pretentious importance of this world. Let it keep you from ever being content with the home you have here. Discontentment with the world system might be God's greatest work of grace in your heart.

Nothing you try will make this world your home. It just isn't, not if you're a child of God. There's something in you that will only be home when you see the face of your God and your Savior and rest at peace in His presence. Then you'll see – that's what you're made for. That's what your heart beats for. Only then will you be content and secure. Only then will you be, finally, at home.

The psalmist had a clear picture of home in his mind, and it had little to do with where he lived or who was around him. He wrote to proclaim - or perhaps to remind himself - that home was all about the presence of God. That any place was home when he was in God's presence, and that no place was home when he lost sight of God's face.

So what about us? What about you? You can appreciate it when this life gives you a taste of home, but don't ever allow that taste to satisfy your hunger for the home that only God can give you. The home that we find from time to time in family, church, friendship - that's only a whiff, a sneak preview of the home that we



can have in God. Allow it to whet your appetite, but don't make the mistake of thinking that anything the world or human beings can offer can be home for you. You aren't made for that. You're made to live forever in the presence of God, to rejoice in the warmth of His love, lose yourself in celebration of His grace, and wrap yourself in the comfort and security of His faithfulness.

The psalmist knew the temptation of calling the places and people around him home, but he also knew what would keep him from giving into that temptation. Worship. When he came into God's presence in worship he knew he was home. Whatever competing visions of home might impinge upon his imagination, worship lifted his imagination to dwell on being truly at home in God's presence.

It will for us as well, and that's why we need to worship. Oh, God deserves our worship, no doubt about that. We should worship Him just because of who He is. But the great blessing of worship to us is that it allows us to come into the presence of our Father and ask Him to help us to remember our home. When we worship, as Walter Wangerin says, "we are reminded who owns the house."

And when we worship, God gives us a tour. He leads us around His house, shows us its treasures, and reminds us that there is a place there for us, too. And when we go out into the world in

which we live, it is with hearts quickened, spirits lifted, and imaginations captivated by what we've seen. When we go back out into the world in which we live, we go as aliens and strangers, unable to feel quite so at home there as before.

If you're having trouble remembering what home looks like, then perhaps a time of worship is what you need. Go to your Father and ask Him to show you the house. The promises of the world will look a lot less charming, its shelter less secure, its foundations less firm. And you'll go away convinced that there is nowhere else you want to live than in the safety and peace of God's house.

I invite you to stay in His presence through worship, a presence that says, "Welcome Home!"