

Isaiah 55:10-13

July 16, 2017

“Going Home”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday af. Pentecost (Proper 10)

Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and God our Heavenly Father. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

**[Introduction]** *Home!*

The word evokes feelings of: love and laughter,  
security and serenity,  
warmth and welcome.

It means: mom and dad,  
fun and games,  
really good food,  
and deep, deep sleep.

HOME: “Home, home on the range.”

“When Johnny comes marching home again. Hurrah. Hurrah!”

& Dorothy who repeated: “There’s no place like home!”

“There’s no place like home!”

“There’s no place like home!”

**[The Situation]**

Isaiah wrote of home.

He wrote in the eighth century BC.

And he speaks to the Israelites living in Babylon in the sixth century BC.

He speaks to exiles far from home.

He speaks to exiles in a monstrous reality called Babylon.

In 587 BC the Babylonians decided once and for all

to destroy that “rebellious city,”

to destroy the southern kingdom Judah.

Gathered by the waters of Babylon, the exiles wistfully wondered:

Is our God for real?

Does He really care about us? CAN YOU RELATE?

They wondered:

Just how can we believe in a God who lost the war?

Why not worship Babylonian gods?

After all, their armies are more powerful than ours.

Lord, “Will you be angry with us forever?”

The exiles are stuck in a land... stuck in a land with canals and ziggurats

with the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers

and with the Ishtar Gate and that detestable statue of Marduk.

Judah and Jerusalem and the Jordan ...

They have been replaced by the building projects of  
Nabopolassar and his son — Nebuchadnezzar.

For Israel there was no king, no temple,

no royal city, no land,  
no liturgy, no sacrifice,

no hope, no future, and no song.

How can they sing God's songs while in a foreign land? (cf. Ps 137:4).

So by the rivers of Babylon they sit and weep (Ps 137:1),

reminiscing about the good ol' days

when they worshiped in the splendor of Solomon's temple,

worked and shopped in the city of David,

and saw the Mount of Olives from a distance.

O God, "there's no place like home!"

"there's no place like home!"

"there's no place like home!"

Israelites in exile are not only far away from home;

more pressing, they are far away from the Father.

As the Lord's firstborn son (cf. Ex 4:22),

Israel had demanded his fair share of the inheritance,

set off for a distant country,

and squandered it all on wild living;

Oh the world around them!

Enticing Baal worship,

seductive Assyrian astral deities,

the perverting of justice and righteousness,

heartless worship, gutless faith.

And then

August 19, 587 BC—the collapse of Jerusalem—"the day the music died!"

Bye, Bye, Oh Promise Land Pie

Some of us are far away from home;

Left to our own – all of us are far away from the Father.

It's just the way we operate.

We are, right here, right now, exiled in a Babylon of our own making.

You and I –

We have demanded our fair share of the inheritance and set off for  
distant lights, seductive lights, deadly lights.

We've sold our baptismal inheritance and ended up with dishonest lives.

We've empty relationships, and inflated egos.

And so we've no song to sing.

[*Christ Saves*]

In our exile God speaks,

***“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands” (55:12).***

All exiles are invited to join in this hymn of all creation!

Just when the music had died

and Israel's history seemed closed by Babylonian imperial policy,

to the shock and surprise of everyone,

the Lord raised up his messiah Cyrus (45:1).

The Northern Kingdom scattered in exile by the A – Assyrians.

The Southern Kingdom assimilated in exile by the B – Babylonians.

And the Israelites saved by the Persian C – Cyrus.

Cyrus was a savior for the day.

Christ is our savior for life.

Christ is the Servant wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (53:5).

And guaranteeing this deliverance is the power and faithfulness of God's Word (55:10–11).

These promises will not return empty. God said it. That settles it. Faith believes it!

In Bethlehem, this faithful Word took on flesh and blood, and he had a heart.

He lived exiled from the Father's home for thirty-three years.

Jesus was exiled, not just from the Father's home, but finally from the Father:

***“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*** (Mk 15:34; cf. Ps 22:1).

His lips are cracked and his mouth is parch.  
His throat, so dry he can't swallow;  
His voice, so hoarse he can scarcely speak.

To find the last time moisture touched these lips  
we need to go back a dozen hours to the meal in the Upper Room.

Since tasting the cup of the new covenant,  
Jesus has been spit upon, bruised, and beaten.  
He has been a cross-carrier and a sin-bearer;  
no liquid has quenched his thirst.  
He has no song to sing, so that day the music died.

Yet raised on the third day, the song, better, the symphony, rocks on! It is not dead!  
Our God is alive!

***“In my Father’s house are many rooms, if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?”*** (Jn 14:2).

***“Our citizenship is in heaven”*** (Phil 3:20).

***“We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”*** (2 Cor 5:1b).

This is no dorm room or army barracks.  
This isn't Tom Bodett for Motel 6, where they'll leave the light on for you.  
And this isn't even the Grand Floridian concierge at Walt Disney World  
Or the Ritz in Paris.

It is infinitely better. The robe and sandals are ready, and so is the ring.  
The price is paid, the party prepared, the sacrifice complete,  
and the Father has rehearsed his lines:  
This son of mine ***“was dead and is alive again”*** (Lk 15:32).

And so let's sing with mountains and hills, and with the trees let us clap our hands.

Let's ***“Join in the Hymn of All Creation,  
for the Lamb Who Was Slain Has Begun His Reign!”***

Because Jesus' Dying Love Means Exactly This: We Are Going Home!  
And there is no place like home. Amen.

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Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, ...  
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations,  
for ever and ever! AMEN!

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