

WELCOME 30 December 2018 – 1 Christmas '18 C

Luke 2:41-52

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! It is great to have you here. Please stay with us for morning tea after worship...

Home. The very word strikes a chord deep inside each of us...maybe for different reasons.

For some...Home means sanctuary, the place we can rest, relax, enjoy time with friends & family...It's where we hide our mess & just be.

For others...Home means fear, anger, grief and sorrow. Home is a place of hurt & woundedness. Home is just mess

Our homes say a lot about who we are and what we think is important in life. But sometimes the very homes in which we feel safe & comfortable, keep our life small, our visions narrow, and our world empty. We use our homes to keep certain things & certain people out.

There comes a time when those of us who follow Jesus need to see our dwellings here as temporary...our homes as instruments of God's blessing to us & the means through which we can bless others. Jesus needs to grow our hearts, expand our horizons, & widen our embrace of what he alone can bring to our lives & the places here we call home.

Today Jesus invites and guides us to a place that can handle all the mess of our lives. Jesus came into the mess of this world, to show you where you belong: The Father's House. If you're lost or needing direction, if you've spent years searching & still can't find what you are looking for, let him lead you to the Father's house. There you will find life in all its fullness; a home where you can live in rooms of mercy, forgiveness, joy, love, beauty, generosity, compassion and purpose no matter how much mess 2018 left behind or 2019 brings.

"Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?"

We'll explore & experience that today...

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of glory, your splendor shines from a manger in Bethlehem, where the Light of the world is humbly born into the darkness of human night.

Open our eyes to Christ's presence in the shadows of our world, so that we, like him, may become beacons of your justice, radiant with your hope, beaming with your love, & dazzling in the brightness of your life in all its fullness. We pray in Jesus' Name...Amen.

1 CHRISTMAS '18 C – CHRISTMASMESS: THE PLACE FOR OUR MESS

FAITH CHAT:

1. If you were to describe your home in a word or two, what would it be?
2. Reflect on 2018. Which room would you like to close the door on for good?
3. In 2019, in what room of God's house would you like to spend more time in 2019?

The Dominion & Tour 18 were my first experiences of what's called "gated communities." Those are communities/subdivisions where the road in is blocked by a large gate & a guard who lets into the community only those people who have a reason & an appointment/approval to be there. You can't just drive up & say, "I'm here to see my friend Joe" because if Joe hasn't told the guard you're coming & if Joe doesn't say "Sure let my friend in"...you don't get in.

The Dominion is in San Antonio...Tour 18 is in Flower Mound. I got to do a wedding at a home in the Dominion...that was freaky. Not only was there a guard at the gate, but at every intersection there was another, pointing which way to go just so the wedding guests didn't wind up at the wrong house & disturb someone. Tour 18s are all over the world. They're a golf-course-focused development that take 18 of the most famous course holes in the world, replicate them somewhere else & build whopping big houses around 'em. Leonie & I lived near Tour 18 while it was still being built & we used to drive in & have a sticky beak. Then I was part of the Chamber of Commerce & we used to go out there for lunch & functions...I was regularly on the guard's little "approved" list.

Most of us will never live in or maybe even visit those sorts of homes...but in a small way, we live "gated" in our own homes...we are for the most part choosy about who gets in & when they are allowed in. Seriously...I don't make visits or even phone calls during certain hours of the day/night because I'm pretty sure what sort of reception I'll get. I spent a hot summer in Houston after my 2nd year of Sem knocking on doors surveying folks for a couple of churches & 1 guy set his dog on me...Just think of how you feel when the JWs show up & won't take "no thank you" for an answer..."no junk mail" stickers?

But our homes help determine who we are. Certainly this is true when we are kids, but it is especially true as we grow up. Home is where we learn to walk & talk...how to interact with the world. Our homes are our 1st & best "school." Home is where we create our identities. Our homes shape our picture of ourselves. Home is where we learn our first values & beliefs. Home is where we develop our attitudes toward other people. We build our 1st relationships in our homes.

Home is where we learn our family business...how we operate how we do things how we make decisions...how we organize our view of the world...how we treat others how we have fun how we work/study/play/vote...I would bet, that things your parents did habitually...you either have adopted or had to intentionally avoid because we pass on habits generationally. Home, where the family business is chaos, passes on chaos...hurt insensitivity abuse addiction...we know the generational repetition...mess quite predictably breeds mess. No surprise or shock there...we know that.

Let's all be serious...no one likes to move from one home to another...Having just done it...let me assure you we are learning through trial & error (more error than anything else) how to function differently as a family in a different home. If you've ever moved away from home & then moved back home again...I did it a few times in my post-high-school-student years...there's a whole new set of challenges...Growing up means moving out & finding a new home. That may be a geographical move, but most certainly it involves psychological & spiritual moves.

So it is no surprise that Mary would be in a panic when she discovers that Jesus is not with the group of travelers. With anxiety at fever pitch she & Joseph search. Three days later Jesus has been found. Mary's first words: "*Son! Why have you done this to us?*" sound a lot to me like, "Where have you been young man? Your father & I did not survive angel visits, birth in a manger, & living like refugees in Egypt only to have you wander off like this."

But Jesus isn't the one who is lost. He knows exactly who he is & where he belongs. Mary & Joseph are the lost ones. Hold onto that thought...Then listen to Jesus. "*But why did you need to search? Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?*" That's not just adolescent swagger. That's not a teen son bristling at his mother's helicopter parenting. That's not an embarrassed "Aw Mom!" Jesus has moved into his true home...the Father's house. But rather than leaving Mary & Joseph behind... he's asking them to join him. This is not a rejection of his earthly parents but an embrace of his heavenly Father. It is precisely the same invitation Simon, Andrew, James, John & Matthew & Paul received when they heard the words "Follow me."

"*Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?*" Didn't you know the angel was serious...that my life is my Father's mission to redeem & save? Didn't you know I won't live into your hopes/dreams/expectations because I came to fulfill

my Father's will? Didn't you know I would always be with you, but I will never belong to you because my very existence is of the Father & for the Father & to the Father?

Jesus will not let himself be defined by Mary & Joseph's needs, concerns, fears or expectations. He refuses to become enmeshed in their feelings or emotions. He does not live by their standards or opinions. He is not guided by a need for their blessing. That doesn't mean Jesus doesn't care. It means, rather, that as the only Son of the Father he is free to love them (& us) beyond their (our) wildest dreams & imaginings. It means, that as the only Son of the Father he is free to give himself fully for our salvation...to give himself to death so we might live. It means, that as the only Son of the Father he is free to dwell in our homes to move into our lives to claim our very existence for the Father's purpose & plan & will. 1 Peter 3:18

*Christ suffered for our sins once for all time.
He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God.*

For that to happen according to the plan & purpose of the Father, Jesus has to get out of the manger & into his Father's house. Images of sweetness, sentimentality, & sanitized manger scenes might make us feel good but they don't transform our lives. A Jesus who is locked into in the home of Mary & Joseph under the power & control of earthly expectations & earthbound desires has no power to speak the truth to the unsanitized mess of our lives & our world. We need One who will call us into the Father's house, teach us the Father's business, & plant in our hearts the Father's heart that only he can reveal to us.

"Didn't you know...?" is not so much a rebuke as it is an invitation...a call...to allow Jesus to grow our hearts, expand our horizons, & widen our embrace of what he alone can bring to our lives & the places here we call home. Jesus invites & then guides us to the place that can handle all the mess of our lives. Jesus came into the mess of this world, to show you where you belong: The Father's House.

This is the last Sunday of 2018...I don't know how much mess this year left in your life...I get the shakes just thinking about what this year has blown up in me...I hesitate to look into 2019 & what sort of mess might be waiting there...how much is just unknown

But I know the Father's house is the place for all that mess. I know in the Father's house I will be given life in all its fullness. I know the Father's house is a home where we are invited to live in rooms of mercy, to settle in rooms of forgiveness, to delight in rooms of joy, to abide in rooms of love, to enjoy rooms of beauty, to bask in rooms of generosity, to rest in rooms of compassion & to walk boldly in rooms of purpose.

"Believe in God & believe also in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house, & I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so. And after I go & prepare a place for you, I will come back & take you to myself, so that you will always be where I am." Jn 14:1-3

You know...we often read Jn 14 at funerals...& there's tremendous comfort & assurance in these verses. An eternal place in the Father's house. A place in Christ's presence that is unassailable...secure...guaranteed in his life/death/rez. But this isn't a "funeral setting" – Oh...it certainly is the night Jesus will be arrested, tortured, crucified, killed & buried...but the setting is a commissioning...a call to mission in his name. This is the night he promises the Spirit. This is the night he promises that all who live in him will bear eternal fruit. This is the night Jesus promises the joy found only in loving the way he loves & self-giving the way he gives. This is the night he calls us his friends.

These aren't funeral words...These are words that call us into the Father's house so the Father can claim our very existence for his purpose & plan & will.

"Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?" is an invitation...a call...to allow Jesus to grow our hearts, expand our horizons, & widen our embrace of what he alone can bring to our lives & the places here we call home. Jesus invites & then guides us to the place that can handle all the mess of our lives. Jesus came into the mess of this world, to show you where you belong: The Father's House.

Let's pray with that in mind... **Lord Jesus take us home. Not out of this world, but deeper into the Father's heart & deeper into your mission to the world. Make us agents of your grace, ambassadors of your kingdom, and friends of the King. By your Spirit, release your powerful love in all we do each day. Use all we are and all we have to lead those around us into the room you have prepared to welcome us forever. In your Name we pray... Amen.**