



BONUS: For Anyone Waiting for Home

Every heart carries a narrative of the home we once knew. It's a story of comfort, heartache or a nuanced mix of both. When we're small, we don't think that narrative will ever change. Grandmas will always host Christmas, sisters will always share bedrooms, Saturdays will always mean cartoons. Home will always smell like towels straight from the dryer or feel like the worn out quilt with squares of story, spread out across the bed. Home will always be some version of white bread and lemon fresh Dawn. We know home is more than all of this, but it all counts for better or for worse. We grow up thinking home will always be the way it's always been until one day we realize everything is different.

Maybe now home is the squeaky door you keep meaning to fix, the stairs you keep meaning to sweep, and the porch light that stays on while you're gone, welcoming you back inside from the dark night. But even when home is the best it's ever been, there remains a longing for something we can't quite touch.

While we sit by fires singing Joy to the World, toasting to the good times and holding hands around the table, there's a thin place hovering over the hearth. A whisper of the invisible kingdom we see only through a glass dimly.

We know there's more than this because even at its best, all is not quite right. Longing is woven into our hearts. The golden thread that connects us together as citizens and foreigners at once. This is the paradox of home.

To be human is to scan the horizon for familiar landmarks. They show up in a sudden burst of laughter, in the innocent play of the littlest ones, in a loving glance across the room, or a true word spoken between friends as Christ in you meets Christ in me. And together, we reflect the image of

our knowable God. The glimpses are never perfect, always fleeting and certainly never complete, but they're arrows pointing to the kingdom all around us if we have eyes to see. We aren't the first to look for them.

When Jesus walked the dusty roads of earth, many followed him, but then changed their minds. He was too much for some and not enough for others. He turned to his friends, the disciples, and asked if they wanted to go away, too. As we continue to learn what it truly means to be home, may we say, along with Peter, "Lord, where else would we go?"

Because even with the questions we carry, even in the fog of mystery, even in the pain we see and feel in the world, we confess to Jesus, along with Peter, "We have no other home, but you."

What would happen if we refused to demand home look the way we think it ought to look, sound the way we think it ought to sound or provide what we think we most need? How might Jesus be born in us today, with all of our joy and grief, our lack and our longing? How is God inviting the homesick home?

Our friend Jesus knows what it means to walk as a foreigner. There was a real day when he became a real baby born in a real cave from a real woman. He was a real human and a real king who came to bring real life, but he came in an unexpected way, to an unlikely couple in an unsupportive town. He lived and then he died and then he lives again so that we might have life, not just life forever with him, but life on this real day, in this real room, in the midst of our real pain and our real joy. So no matter how bad things get, no matter how heavy the sorrow, life will continue to move and hope is always an option.

We have a new family legacy, one of kindness, wholeness, love and new life. Belonging is our birthright and now God calls us his own. Still, we wait. We wait for the day when we'll sit together at the banquet table in our father's house. When the storms have passed and the shaking has stilled, when the sleepless nights burst forth into the bright light of morning, when the heartbreak is eased and the death sting is healed and the deformities reform into resurrection life. Until then we will treasure every glimpse of home we get. Today, if the weight feels endless, sorrow cast too long a shadow, if too much change and sad goodbyes have worn down the edges of hope, don't be afraid.

God has not forgotten us. He will not abandon us. He invites us to turn to each other as ones in whom Christ dwells, as living homes of God, and we'll confess his goodness until we begin to believe it. We'll turn in hope and we'll whisper words of welcome because even as we long for a home we can't quite touch, we can embrace each other as the home of God because that is what we are. God moved in and everything changed. And now he's making all things new in you and in me. This is the joy of the world. This is his kingdom come.

It is just as Isaiah said it would be. They will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us. And so they did and so he is. Welcome home, child of God. Welcome home, friend of Jesus.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever more shall be. Amen.