

April 5, 2015
Isaiah 55:6-13

Easter B
We are Going Home

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Resurrected King. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! **He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!**

Home! The word evokes feelings of love and laughter, security and serenity, warmth and welcome. It means mom and dad, brother and sister, maybe even grandma and grandpa, fun and games, good food, deep sleep. "Home, home on the range." "When Johnnie comes marching home." But a little girl from Kansas says it best, "There's no place like home!"

Isn't that so true, last summer as Emily, the girls and I, were traveling across the Midwest, it almost seemed like we were homeless...starting down in Necedah, up here to Fisher over to my hometown of Antigo, down to Emily's home of St. Louis, to Springfield for Doxology, and then back up here to Fisher. Traveling what seemed to be a long time. We realized something when we got back up here to Fisher for installation...the girls and I were to our new home. And yes it's been full of fun and games, good food, good sleep, mom and dad and the two sisters. When we arrived home from all those travels we repeated Dorothy saying, "There's no place like home."

I'm sure you too have been there when you've been gone for a few days or a few weeks, "there's no place like home." Your own bed, your own routine, your own food, it's a great place to be.

I can tell you this, today, Easter Sunday, means you and I are going home!

Let's unpack this promise as we finish looking at Isaiah 40-55 this morning.

Isaiah, writing in the eighth century BC, addresses Israelites living in Babylon in the sixth century BC. And these exiles are far away from home. A terrible reality called Babylon was a fire-breathing monster that devastated everything. In 587 BC, the empire decided once and for all to destroy Jerusalem, described in the Babylonian archives as "*a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces, and a place of rebellion from ancient times*" (Ezra 4:15).

Now in refugee camps, Judeans are stuck in a land with canals and ziggurats and the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers and the Ishtar Gate and the detestable statue of Marduk. Judah and Jerusalem and the Jordan have been replaced by the building projects of Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar. Judeans, have no king, no temple, no royal city, no land, no sacrifice, no hope, and no future. Oh God! "There's no place like home!"

The exiles are far away from home but, more pressing, they are far away from the Father. Just like the prodigal son, Israelites demanded their fair share of the

inheritance, set off for a distant country, and squandered it all on wild living. The list is long and ugly: enticing Baal worship, seductive Assyrian astral deities, perverting justice and righteousness, worthless worship, false faith. On August 19, 587 BC Jerusalem was destroyed. It was the day the music died!

Some of us are far away from home but, more pressing, all of us are far away from the Father. It's the way we operate. We are, again, right here, just now, stuck in the exile of our own making. We demand our fair share of the inheritance and set off for distant, seductive, deadly lights. We sell our baptismal promise—for what? Duplicitous lives, empty relationships, and inflated egos. Then Satan plants his foot on our necks and shouts, "God is finished with you!"

But God speaks to exiles! In Isaiah 55:12, God says, *"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."*

Just when the music had died and it seemed like there was no way for Israel to get home, for Israel's history seemed closed and controlled by hopeless Babylonian imperial policy, to the shock and surprise of everyone the Lord stirs up His messiah Cyrus who defeats Babylon and then releases (RELEASES!) the exiles. A Servant is wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him and by His wounds (BY HIS WOUNDS!) we are healed. The climax of Isaiah's program in chapters 40-55 is God's promise to bring the exiles home.

Standing behind this promise is God's Almighty Word. Earlier Isaiah wrote, *"The Word of our God stands forever"* (40:8). Now the Lord promises that this same Word will never return empty. God said it. That settles it. Faith believes it!

In Bethlehem this powerful Word took on flesh and blood, and He has a heart. Jesus knows the bitter pain of exile. He was far away from home (*"Foxes have holes and births of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head"* [Luke 9:58]); but more pressing, He was far away from the Father. Over the past few days we heard how Jesus was betrayed, spit upon, scourged, beaten, denied, arrested, bound, etc. Stretched out upon the cross, He cries out, *"My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?"* (Matthew 27:46). It was the day the music died. It was the day it seemed Jesus was never going home again!

Yet, today we celebrate, we celebrate because He was bodily raised on the third day, the song—check that—the grand symphony of celebration rocks on! For JESUS IS ALIVE! JESUS LIVES, just as He promised He would!!

I had transferred colleges for a whole host of reasons, and I get assigned a room to myself, I figured it would be small, but I didn't know how small, next to the fire exit I open my room, and let me tell you, my stuff barely fit into the space. What a small space to live in for some 9 months or so! Having to climb to my bed up in sky, having to keep

most of my belongings packed in boxes. It felt like I had to go outside to change my mind. And to call this home! NO WAY! The day I moved in? It was the day the music died!

We all just want a place of love and laughter, security and serenity, warmth and welcome; a place that means mom and dad, fun and games, good food, and deep sleep with no nightmares of falling out of bed onto a hard wooden desk chair that sits below. We just a home!

You know; O God, you know!

Some of you have felt forlorn ever since your spouse died, your child was buried, you lost your job, or your doctor pointed out that lump in your breast or that spot on your lung. Others of you wanted a home ever since your home collapsed when it was hit by divorce, debt or debilitating disease.

I might be exaggerating a little bit about my time living in Augsburg Dorm, but I could never, ever, ever overstate the promise of the day: Easter means we are going home! Because JESUS LIVES, we, too, shall live. Because Jesus rose, we, too, shall rise on the LAST DAY. And He will take us home, to the New Jerusalem, where there will no pain, no tears, no cancer, no sickness, no divorce, no debt, no disease, no depression, no death, and no end!!

Jesus promises you, *“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you”* (John 14:2). This is no dorm room or army barracks or student housing. This is no Super 8, Econo Lodge, or Motel 6 where all they do is leave the lights on for you! And shout it from the rooftops: THIS IS NO AUGSBURG DORM ROOM! 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; he was lost but now is found”* (Luke 15:24).

“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” (Isaiah 55:12).

And our response? We “join in the hymn of all creation...For the Lamb who was slain has begun His reign.” (LSB, 155). We sing an endless and deathless Hallelujah. Why? We are going home! We are going home because Jesus is going to take us home, because Jesus is Alive!

Alleluia! He is Risen! **He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!** Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Risen Lord and Savior. Amen.