

Twice this summer I've had the same experience—coming to the last day of a wonderful family vacation and realizing I wanted nothing more than simply to be home. I'm sure you know what I mean. There are the obvious reasons like the comfort of your own bed and the pleasure of a home-cooked meal. But there's often something deeper at work there, too—a desire for belonging, familiarity, acceptance. We tire of being displaced and feeling like an outsider. We want to be home.

It's a theme the poets and musicians love—how many bands and solo artists have released a recording called “Home” or “Going Home” or “Homeward Bound”? You've got Philip Phillips (Home), Michael Buble (Home), Chris Tomlin (Home), Simon and Garfunkel (Homeward Bound), Switchfoot (This is Home), P Diddy (Coming Home), Bon Jovi & Jennifer Nettles (Who Says You Can't Go Home), John Denver (Take Me Home, Country Roads), Mumford & Sons (Home), Merle Haggard (Sing Me Back Home), The Beach Boys (Sloop John B), The Disco Biscuits (Home Again), even the great Ozzy Osbourne (Mama I'm Coming Home).

What's especially interesting—or maybe I should say “distressing”—is that often it's a feeling we get even when we are not on vacation. We feel almost like we belong to a far-off country, like we wish we could return home only it's a home we know doesn't even exist. Some call it Nostalgia or Romanticism. One author calls it our “Universal Homesickness” (F. Buechner, *Longing for Home*)—this mix of yearning, wistfulness, and nameless desire for a lost place. Some languages have a separate word for it, a term that has no exact equivalent in English: *saudade* (sow DAJ ay Portuguese), *toska* (Russian), *tizita* (Ethiopian), *hiraeth* (HEE rithe Welsh)

It's a common theme in human culture because it's one of the most common themes in the Bible: the motif of “Home” and the related experience of living in exile.

In the beginning, God placed Adam and Eve in their perfect home—a garden paradise where every need was met and every desire satisfied. Best of all, He Himself was there, and he walked with them every day

and communed with them in real, personal experience. But sin entered their home, and the result was exile—God banished our first parents from the Garden and we've been longing for Home ever since. If Home is like Eden—a place of belonging, flourishing, harmony—then the world as we know it today is Babylon—filled with selfishness, restlessness, hatred, and decay. We are all exiles, living east of Eden, forever trying to find our way Home.

It's the theme Jesus turns to in our text today. The disciples are tense. Moments earlier, Judas left the group and headed out into darkness. Jesus just predicted Peter's betrayal. He's been saying some troubling things. But in spite of all that, He doesn't want them to be uneasy:

v1 *Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.*

So He turns to the subject He knows will minister to them the most: the subject of Home. Best of all, He tells them it's a place He has put together specifically with them in mind:

vv2-3 *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? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*

If you feel restless and homesick today, let Jesus' words minister to you. If you wonder how to satisfy your ineffable sense of **saudade** or **hiraeth**, I hope you'll listen up. Your Savior understands, and He promises an answer. As C. S. Lewis put it in his great sermon “The Weight of Glory”:

Our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honor beyond all our merits and also the healing of that old ache.

Jesus makes three important assertions:

1. Home/Heaven is more a Person than a place, more a relationship than a destination.
2. Home/Heaven has house rules, and keeping them is an essential part of living there.
3. Home/Heaven is always ready for you, but Jesus had to get you ready for it.

Home/Heaven is more a Person than a place, more a relationship than a destination.

If you've been a Christian for any length of time, these opening verses of chapter 14 are very familiar. You might have memorized them and sung songs based on them. But there are a couple ideas/emphases you might have embraced that miss the point of what Jesus is really saying:

Lavish personal wealth vs. Home with God

v2 *In my Father's house are many rooms.*

"Many rooms" is commonly thought of as "mansions" because of the way the KJV rendered it. But that's not what the Greek word means—at least, not anymore. "Mansion" is a Old Latin word that the King James translators carried over from William Tyndale's translation, who took it from the Latin Vulgate. In Old Latin, "mansion" simply meant "dwelling place" or "abode" (cf. "manse," the house and land of a minister).

It's a word used only 2x in the NT, both in this chapter: v2 and v23

v23 *Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*

Contrary to some old favorite Southern Gospel songs, the great glory of heaven is NOT that you get to finally live in your own mansion. The glory of heaven is that you finally get to live with God forever! Paradise in the Christian understanding is not a heavenly version of the American dream, where all your materialistic desires are sanctified and satisfied. Paradise is about being home in God—your own room in God's house (v2) and God making His home with you (v23).

The Place vs. the Person

As you continue reading, Jesus takes the conversation in some unexpected directions (as usual!). Why? What's He talking about? He's talking about taking them to the Father's house (vv2-3), and then...

vv4-7 *"And you know the way to where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."*

Verse 4 is a slight change in topic from the Place to the Way. Thomas voices his confusion: "Wait, I thought we were talking about a 'Where.'

You haven't even told us that yet. So how can we know the way?" Jesus answers (v6): "I am the Way. You get to the Father through me." OK, makes sense. But then He seems to change subjects entirely:

v7 *"If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."*

So far He's been talking about taking us to heaven (vv2-3) and how He is the only Way there (v6). But then (v7) He starts talking about "knowing me, knowing the Father, and seeing God." What does that have to do with going to heaven? It would make more sense if He had said, "If you had come to me, you would have come to my Father also" or something like that, keeping the focus on going (sometime way off in the future) to heaven (somewhere way off in the distance).

The connections aren't clear, but for now, Philip lets it go. He picks up on that last thing Jesus just said: "You have seen him [the Father]":

v8 *Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."*

Jesus once again starts teaching about His oneness with the Father:

vv9-11 *Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.*

And then He completely changes subjects and starts talking about great works, prayer, and the coming of the Holy Spirit:

vv12-17 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. ¹⁵ If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.*

What is going on here? Why is Jesus changing the subject so quickly from one thing to the next? Actually, He's not. He's changing subjects ONLY IF you were mistaken about what He was talking about in the first place, all the way back in vv2-3. Jesus IS talking about heaven in vv2-3—the eternal home He has prepared for His people. But He is NOT talking primarily about heaven as a distant place we'll go sometime in the

distant future. Of course, heaven is that. But Jesus is emphasizing something else here. **He's talking about the essential thing that makes heaven truly heaven—knowing God Himself.** In fact, He's describing a taste of heaven that's available to us right now.

If you're thinking in terms of location, most of what Jesus says after vv2-3 seems like a radical change in topic. But if you're reading all this in terms of relationship, it all follows perfectly. Thomas (v5) is thinking in terms of place: "Where are you going? What's the way?" Jesus corrects him: "I am the Way [to God], the Truth [about God], and the Life [of God]. No one comes [present tense] to the Father except through me." That's the point He was making in vv2-3, too: "take you to myself" (v3). In other words, He is saying "I am leaving this dimension and going into the very presence of God. I've told you again and again how to draw near to God—draw near to me." This is exactly what He says in vv5-7:

v7 "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

In other words, Jesus is saying, "**The Home you long for and the Heaven I'm preparing is God Himself.**" THAT is why He reminds them again of His oneness with the Father (vv8-11)—because if you know Jesus, you know God, and heaven is knowing God. Everything else follows from this: prayer (vv12-14) in about knowing God, the Holy Spirit is God Himself with us and in us (vv15-17). This is heaven. This is eternal life:

17:3 *And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*

Heaven is more a Person than a place, a relationship than a destination.

All through this Gospel, Jesus has been driving home the intimacy and oneness between Himself and the Father: "I and my Father are one. I say nothing except what the Father says, do nothing apart from the Father's will." Now, Jesus expands this teaching to draw His followers into this mysterious Trinitarian oneness – mutual indwelling, personal fellowship, and complete and perfect unity:

14:18-21 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

(cf. 15:5, 15:9, 15:15, 15:20-21, 15:26-27, 16:27)

To be drawn into the fellowship of the Trinity itself—that is heaven.

Are you waiting for a heaven way out there and then? Or are you experiencing a little taste of it right here and now? This is what you were made for, the heaven Jesus offers, the home you long for.

Home/Heaven has house rules, and keeping them is an essential part of living there.

Like any home, there are basic expectations/rules for living there:

vv21-24 *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" ²³ Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.*

Notice the order: "Love... then Obey" (vv15, 21, 23, 24). The world is made up of 2 types of people—the religious rule-keeper and the free-thinking libertarian. God's house rules challenge both.

- LOVE – challenges the outwardly religious, well-behaved, morally upright people, because it says God cares about your heart more than your actions. In fact, the *only* kind of obedience He accepts is the kind that flows from love toward Him. There are lots of reasons to keep rules: fear, pride, self-interest, timidity. Only 1 motivation pleases God: LOVE.
- OBEY – challenges the progressively minded, more liberal approach. Social media and bumper sticker theology: "I feel God everywhere. God accepts everyone. Of course God loves us all; why wouldn't He?"

Look at v21:

v21 *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."*

The heaven God offers—intimacy with God, love from the Father—is offered **ONLY** to the one who loves and obeys God.

v23 *Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with*

him.

Outwardly religious people are no better off than love-only libertarians!
We have to love God and obey Him... which leads to point 3.

Home/Heaven is always ready for you, but Jesus had to get you ready for it.

Look again at Jesus' opening words:

vv2-4 *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? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going."*

Where is He going? Heaven, right? The Father's house. The verse conjures images of Jesus with His old carpenter's belt on, framing walls and laying floors. He's "preparing a place and building me a mansion."

But that's not what He means at all. Just moments ago He told these men He was going away, and Peter asked Him about it:

13:31-33, 36 *When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' ³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward."*

Where is He going? He's going to the cross. What work is He planning to do to prepare the place for them? He's going to die to atone for their sins—failing to LOVE God and failing to OBEY His commandments.

Don't you see? We are exiles who long to come Home. But now, because of the incarnation, we aren't alone in exile. He hasn't left us as orphans (v18). Jesus left His own home, was born in Bethlehem away from His parents' hometown, fled to Egypt in exile, wandered on earth without a home of His own, and was finally crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem—the ultimate sign of rejection (Hb 13:11-12). He experienced the exile and alienation we deserve and know so well. He was cast out so you could be brought home.

Rick taught us last week that this is Jesus' farewell speech, and it's

modeled after Moses. That's true, and here ***Jesus is promising to lead His people on the Ultimate Exodus out of exile and into their true and eternal Home by bringing them into fellowship with God forever!***

Friends, this is Home. He is Home. Your homesickness is truly longing for Him, and only in Him will it be satisfied.

Jesus says: "I am the Way, the Truth, the Life. Do you want to come Home to the Father? You can, if you'll come through Me."

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