

# LAST SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR

“Homecoming”

Our Redeemer Dallas 2020

*Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Dear people of God,

We are going home. I say that in full acknowledgement of the fact that

## **The earth is our home.**

I don't mean to give the impression that we don't belong here. We do. This world was made for us. God made the light so we could see. He divided the waters above from the waters below so we could breathe. He gathered the waters together and made dry land appear so we could have a place to live. He caused the earth to bring forth vegetation so we could eat. He made the sun, moon, and stars so we could order our lives. He gave us the animals so we could know in some small part what it's like to care for something the way He cares for us. And then, having made all the preparations, God said, “Let Us make man in Our own image.” And He did. Male and female He created them and placed them in their perfect home. And it was good. It was *very* good.

But there was trouble in Paradise. As good as the home God made for us was, the devil came along and managed to make a crack, just enough to slip in the seed of doubt, which grew and grew until it split the foundation, rendering our home unlivable. The ground was cursed, and so were we, doomed to return to the dust.

You feel it, don't you? Something about this world's not right. As much as we try to cover it up or pretend it's not there, deep in our heart of hearts we *know* something's wrong. This may be our home,

## **But it's broken.**

*We're* broken. Things are not the way they're supposed to be. We are anxious and afraid. We are lonely and depressed. We fear for our lives. We trust no one. We weep and cry out in distress, if only when no one else is around to hear the sound. We encounter opposition to our faith, friends and family who have rejected the truth of God's Word, putting us in a better position to understand what Jesus meant when He said, “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24). We sin. We suffer tragedy. We die. It's not right. None of it is. This isn't the way it's supposed to be.

But, dear people of God, we are going home. We messed up this world, but Christ came to fix it, and not just fix it, but as God says near the end of Revelation, “Behold, I make all things *new*” (21:5). Our home may be broken, but because He lived and died and rose again for us,

**Our Lord Jesus Christ is leading us to a *new* home.**

Earlier, we heard God speak through His prophet Isaiah,

Behold, I create *new* heavens  
and a *new* earth,  
and the former things *shall not be remembered*  
or come to mind.

“The former things,” as in our fears and anxieties, our tears and our sin. It’ll all be gone. You won’t even remember what all the trouble was about, but as Dr. Reed Lessing writes in his commentary on this text, we will turn to each other and say, “Sickness, pain, disease, warfare, death, terrorism—what were they?” Our sins have *already* been removed from us as far as the east is from the west. But that’s only the beginning. What’s being described here in Isaiah is a *total* restoration, a *complete* overhaul. What will the end result look like? Our text goes on to tell us...

First of all,

**Our new home will be *joyful*.**

God says,

Be glad and rejoice forever  
in that which I create;  
for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy,  
and her people to be a gladness.  
I will rejoice in Jerusalem  
and be glad in my people...

You didn’t think God took *delight* in our situation, did you? That He *rejoiced* in what has become of our home? No, but the Lord delights in *prospering* us. “I create Jerusalem to be a *joy*,” He says, and not just for us, but for Himself as well, because our gladness is His gladness. The Lord our God is a jealous God, not a sadistic one. We know that all things work together for *good* for those who love Him, even if that’s not the way it appears now.

But one day, it *will*:

No more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping  
and the cry of distress.

No more shall there be in it  
an infant who lives but a few days,  
or an old man who does not fill out his days,  
for the young man shall die a hundred years old,  
and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

Our home will be *livable* again. It's hard to imagine, the way things are now. Death is all around us. Avoiding it has become a driving factor in our lives. But here, we are reminded that, as Christians, we do not grieve as others do who have no hope. We don't cling to this life as if we have everything to lose. To die is *gain*. This home may be the only one we've ever known, but that doesn't mean it's the only one we'll ever *have*.

The disciples were afraid, too. For fear of death they found themselves hiding behind locked doors on the evening of that first Easter Sunday. But then Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet, and the disciples were glad. They *rejoiced*, even when, later on, they were persecuted, because they *knew* who had the keys of Death and Hades. They knew that, for them, too, death would be like sleep, and that one day they would wake up, as if from a bad dream, and enter into eternal life.

We know that, too, for we are not ignorant of the fact that Christ, who died, has been raised, and that we are baptized *into* His death and resurrection. Our Bridegroom is coming to wake us up, too, and when He does,

**We will dwell *securely*.**

They shall build houses and inhabit them;  
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.  
They shall not build and another inhabit;  
they shall not plant and another eat;  
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,  
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.  
They shall not labor in vain  
or bear children for calamity,  
for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord,  
and their descendants with them.

Back in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, God had threatened that if His people failed to keep His Commandments, He would punish them, allowing others to live in their houses and eat the fruit of their vineyards. They *did* fail, and so He *did* punish them in this way.

But that would all be undone. Their sins would be forgiven by the blood of a *new* covenant, not *their* blood, but the blood of God's own Son, Jesus Christ. He was punished for *all* of us, so we are justified by *faith alone*, and nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore, no matter how much we lose here and now, the Kingdom ours remaineth. You are *safe* in the loving arms of Christ, which He stretched out to embrace the world in His death. And if that's true *now*, then how much *more* secure will you be in the new heavens and new earth, where there is *no* one to invade, *no* one to devour, not for *eternity*?

And so, finally, we know that, in our new home,

**There will be *peace*.**

Echoing some of the language from earlier in Isaiah, our text concludes,

Before they call I will answer;  
     while they are yet speaking I will hear.  
 The wolf and the lamb shall graze together;  
     the lion shall eat straw like the ox,  
     and dust shall be the serpent's food.  
 They shall not hurt or destroy  
     in all my holy mountain,"  
 says the Lord.

That's a pretty idyllic picture: the ravenous wolf grazing together with the helpless lamb; the venomous snake unable to sink his teeth into anything but the dirt. That's what it looks like when the cause of sin and death is removed from reality; when the seed of doubt is dug up and replaced with confidence in the Seed of the woman. Jesus crushed the head of the serpent in order to bring us this peace. He was pierced and bruised, but our Champion prevailed.

And now peace and harmony shall prevail for His *people*. Can you imagine a world where you're not constantly looking over your shoulder? Where there's so much joy and stability that you are anxious about absolutely *nothing*? It's coming, and it's coming sooner than you think. In Christ, God is making all things new.

**So, in the words of our Epistle, stay awake.**

“For God has not destined you for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9). He has gone to prepare a place for you, a home, where none shall hurt or destroy, and He’s coming to take you there, that where He is you may be also. In truth, there’s a lot to love about this world (it’s still God’s creation, after all), but there’s no escaping the fact that it’s broken, *really* broken. Things are not the way they’re supposed to be. But, dear people of God, be glad and rejoice: we are going home. And what a homecoming it will be.

*In ☩ Jesus’ name. Amen. The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

*Soli Deo gloria*