

Worship for the Fifth Sunday of Easter  
April 28, 2024

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

\*Call to Worship

I am the vine, you are the branches, says the Lord.

**Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through me."**

\*Prayer of the Day

**O God, form the hearts of your people into a single will.**

**Make us love what you command and desire what you promise,**

**that amid all the changes of this world, our hearts may be fixed where joy is found,**

**through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

\*Hymn 361 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation, verses 1 and 2

Prayer of Confession

**Holy and merciful God,**

**in your presence, we confess our failure to be what you created us to be.**

**You alone know how often we have sinned in wandering from your ways,**

**in wasting your gifts, in forgetting your love.**

**By your mercy, help us live in your light and walk in your ways,**

**for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.**

Hymn Take, O Take Me As I Am

Assurance of Pardon

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.

Believe the good news of the gospel:

our sins are forgiven. Be at peace.

First Reading 1 Peter 2:2-10

Time for Young Believers

Gospel Reading John 14: 1-14

The Morning Message

What is the story of your home?

How would you describe it to others?

I would describe ours as a Brady Bunch style home with three bedrooms and two and a half baths. The kitchen and one of the bathrooms have been recently updated. We have an above-ground pool and the back yard is enclosed with a stockade fence tall enough that our old dog, Conrad, couldn't climb. He was an escape artist.

Our neighborhood was right in the path of one of the seventeen tornadoes that touched down a few weeks ago. There was a lot of damage done in just a few seconds. The wind is a powerful force.

The two roads that make up our subdivision were impassable for a time. Trees had fallen. Utility lines were down or dangerously dangling from homes and utility poles. We were spared serious damage. We lost a shutter, some gutter and fascia material. The flag pole snapped from its place by the front door. Part of the fence came down. Our neighbors acquired a trampoline in their yard. Power was out for a couple of hours or days depending on which side of the street you resided.

It was home but didn't look or feel much like it for a few days. Anxiety and discomfort were our constant companions. We felt displaced for a time.

Not unlike the disciples to whom Jesus speaks in this text.

“Don't let your hearts be troubled. Don't be afraid.”

The Lord himself reassures them and us that we have nothing to fear. We have a future beyond that which we can see. We have a place. We have a host who has made that place ready for us. We will be with him. And in him, we will be forever home.

Ed and I left home on Iroquois Trail last weekend to attend the memorial service of our friend of many years, Tim Waugh. Tim was a vocal music teacher, like my husband, and their paths crossed frequently over the years.

He was a Presbyterian, having grown up at the Rock Lake Presbyterian Church in South Charleston. He was a church musician, an outstanding organist. But Tim was best known for his expertise in handbells. He composed directed and traveled around the world teaching and ringing. Every now and then Ed would get a text: “Guess where I am?” It could be a small town in the American south or a convention hall in Hong Kong. Tim went to Ireland with us once. He was a world traveler, but was most at home in his house in Princeton, West Virginia.

But, something unexpected happened in the last year. Tim was retired from public school teaching, but still made music. He went to the First Presbyterian Church of Salisbury, North Carolina, to conduct a handbell festival. He discovered the church had a need for an interim music director. He applied and served there for several months, growing very fond of the congregation, the pastors and staff. In time, it became apparent that he and the church were a good fit and the relationship should continue.

Tim called us to say he had just signed a contract to serve the church and a permanent move to Salisbury was in order. And, further, he advised, the small town is just lovely and easily accessible to our own three daughters who live in North Carolina. He was pretty convincing. He had found home.

Tim lived life with a sense of urgency because he had a kidney disease that claimed the lives of his father and grandfather when they were very young. Eighteen years ago, he had a kidney transplant which extended his life and we are grateful. He was very healthy for a long time, checking in with Duke University Hospital yearly, but was recently battling a persistent problem.

Tim was single. He had no biological children, a choice he made due to his kidney disease. But, in fact, his family was the music world and he had many children.

His memorial service was at First Presbyterian Church of Salisbury last Saturday morning. Ed and I traveled there to give God thanks for his life and faith and to thank the good people of Salisbury for loving him and making him a part of their faith community. It was a special place and the only church or community that felt like home to him apart from his place in West Virginia.

It was a grand day altogether, as our Irish friends would say. Sunny, flowers and trees blooming in brilliant colors, the breeze wafting sweet smells of spring around us.

The town may be small, but the church building is massive. The sanctuary ethereal. There was a thirty minute handbell prelude, a grand and glorious choir, a warm and welcoming congregation, a young and inspiring clergy couple whom Tim loved. Lots and lots of beautiful music. But it was hard to sing. Memories, love, and grief caused our voices to stall and crack and rendered us silent for much of it.

As we left the sanctuary- our aging bodies moving slowly after two hours of sitting- a voice sounded behind us, "I hoped I would see you here."

We turned around to behold the familiar face of a beautiful young woman who grew up in Ona, was once Ed's student, and part of a family we've known about as long as we've known Tim. Rebecca Petit, daughter of Tom and Sally. She lives in Charlotte now, an engineer for a pharmaceutical company. She had met Tim on many occasions through Ed and Tim was well known to her Lutheran Church in Charlotte as a handbell musician. In fact, many of them had come to the service. She introduced us.

That little moment, in that small town in which we had never been, that simple statement, "I hoped I would see you here," probably important to no one but us, was reassurance of so much that day. It spoke to us of faith, hope, and love. It spoke to us of home.

Jesus said, "In my father's house are many mansions,,,"  
And churches, singers, orchestras, ringers, pray-ers, pre-schools, youth groups, circles, teams, kitchens, ushers, greeters, preachers, teachers, students...

Friends, our God is so vast. God's house is so expansive. And God's house is standing now, today, just as surely as it stands in the next life. Tim found God's people in places I've never even heard of, let alone visited. Rebecca, whose home was once with her parents and three sisters, has made her home in the Shenandoah Valley, then Virginia Tech, and now makes her home in Charlotte, soon to make a life with her fiancé.

The church invited everyone to stay and break bread-or sandwiches and cookies-together following the service. The Lutherans from Charlotte welcomed us to their table and we greatly appreciated their company.

We walked Rebecca to her car, telling her she had been a comfort to us this hard day. She shared the same. We admired her crossover vehicle with its Hokie license plate holder. She pointed to a sticker in the corner of the back window. A silhouette of West Virginia, with a little heart cut-out.

"Don't let your hearts be troubled, and don't be afraid."

I have no idea what this promised home will look like. I don't think my wish list will include a fireplace this time or stainless steel appliances. It won't matter if the school bus comes by the house, or if the neighbors keep their lawn mowed.

I can imagine it will be a place of peace and welcome, a place so comfortable that I never again think about the need for safety and security. A place where those who mourn can find comfort, where there is always an extra chair, where sweet melodies are wafted to us on the wind, where aromas from the kitchen smell like love.

And the sign on every heart says “home.”

\*Hymn 361 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation, verses 3 and 4

\*Affirmation of Faith The Apostles' Creed p. 35

\*Hymn 580 Gloria Patri

Joys and Concerns of the Church

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory

\*Hymn 607 Doxology

\*Prayer of Dedication

\*Hymn 462 I Love to Tell the Story

\*Blessing

Just as God's Word was sent into the world to heal and redeem,

so God sends you into the world this day

to be light and love, healing and hope.

Go now, and share the good news generously,

and may the grace of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you today and always. Amen.

\*Postlude