

Ephesians 2:19-22 Peterson's *the Message*

Christ came and preached peace to you outsiders and peace to us insiders. He treated us as equals, and so made us equals. Through him we both share the same Spirit and have equal access to God. That's plain enough, isn't it? You're no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home-- using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what God is building; who used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now God's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home.

Justin was happy to be done with college for the summer, he looked forward to his mom's cooking, to catching up with his high school friends, and enjoying some well-deserved sleep after a tough semester. And his parents were thrilled to see him— never mind the piles of laundry— to have him back again in his chair around the dinner table made it seem like all was right with the world. It didn't take 24 hours for Justin to transfer his dorm habits of sloppy neglect and disregard for property to the house he'd grown up in. Then when he used that derisive teenage tone to suggest his younger sister lacked intelligence, his mom stepped in front of him, and said, "I don't know how you acted at school, but you're home now." That's all she needed to say, "you're home now." The implication was clear, here there are expectations, codes of behavior that make this place uniquely "home." For her, home was where we respect each other, where each member of the family is safe. And somewhere deep in Justin, he sighed and was relieved to be home.

Unfortunately, that's not everyone's experience of home. Glide Memorial, a United Methodist Church in San Francisco, runs a house for teenagers who have been kicked out of their homes. Home for everyone, isn't a safe place.

Gordon Hempton, an acoustic ecologist who has spent his life traveling the globe to record sounds from the last great quiet places, didn't have a physical place to call home growing up. Born to a military family in Southern California, as a toddler he lived for a couple years in Hawaii, before being relocated to various locations on the East Coast, the South and back to the West Coast. For college he decided to go to the University of Wisconsin because he said the Midwest was the only place he hadn't lived. And yet when asked about his center of gravity, he immediately names Hawaii, specifically, the volcanos—where there's a sense of presence. He finds himself at home in the soundscapes of silence – places defined not by the absence of sound but listening to natural world.<sup>1</sup>

A native New Englander traveled to the desert home of artist Georgia O'Keefe in New Mexico and discovered, while there, that she felt at home in that landscape like no where else. Of course around here, you often hear people talk about the sea shore in those terms: the sound of the waves rolling in, the sand filling in between the toes, the sea water spraying up onto their skin and the briney smell of the beach— it is a place that settles them, where they feel at home.

In jail, you might think there was no possibility of feeling at home—and indeed, by definition, the place doesn't support the concept, so instead, the conversation turns to how do you feel at home in yourself, regardless of your external location.

I wonder what allows us, encourages us, makes it possible for us to feel at home? Surely, the oldest message of the Bible is the oneness of the Creator and creation. "In the beginning, God." "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Thus the genius of Genesis, and of the religions that follow from it, is the insight that all that exists was and is created by the same God. All that exists was and is created in that God's image. Oneness, is the ground of existence.<sup>2</sup> Our origin, our home is our Oneness with God and creation. O the Hebrew authors may've conceived God as outside of nature and therefore its creator – that bipolarity that separates creator

from creation— and there’s plenty of bad theology out there created in the intervening years that argues for a cosmic war between creator and creation but the saving message is that the Oneness of our faith unites rather than destroys. God is One, and each of God’s creatures participates in that Oneness.<sup>3</sup>

Our language may trip us up and lead us toward bad theology, when at funerals we say someone has “gone home.” But we shouldn’t let that metaphorical language convince us that we are not home now. Far from this life being lived in an alien land in preparation for a heavenly home, Jesus wanted us to know ourselves here and now as children of the One God.... who are at home in our “creatureliness” —in our createdness in the image of Oneness.

We’ve talked about this before, but when Jesus spoke about the kingdom of heaven he wasn’t devaluing earth in favor of an existence after death, he was calling people to a depth of knowing the face of God, inviting us to instances of being intensely present. Life eternal is found in those “out of time” experiences where we know the inter-relatedness of all of life<sup>4</sup>—when we see another’s pain as our own and when we understand that when we lift up one of the least of these, we are reaching out to him, also.

What would it take, for us, in this moment, to be at home? What would it be like for us—if this cosmos, this body, this gathering of disciples were home? What would be the unspoken expectations? The guidelines for actions, perhaps recorded in sacred texts? I wonder: if we knew we were home in creation, how would we feel and act, and be? What difference would it make? Perhaps we can take a moment to listen for that deep sigh within, assuring us we are home and indeed, God is at home in us.

1. From *On Being with Krista Tippett* interview with Gordon Hempton “The Last Quiet Places” (May 10, 2012)

2. *Jerusalem, Jerusalem: how the ancient city ignited our modern world* by James Carroll. 303.

3. *Jerusalem, Jerusalem: how the ancient city ignited our modern world* by James Carroll. 306.

4. *Jerusalem, Jerusalem: how the ancient city ignited our modern world* by James Carroll. 306.