

Jesu Juva

“Home, Not Just for the Holidays, but Forever”
Text: Isaiah 51:4-6; Mark 13:24-37; Jude 20-25
2 Peter 3:13b (Introit antiphon)

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

We are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

Those words were the *antiphon* - the first and last verses - of the Introit we sang today. Words most appropriate for this Last Sunday of the Church Year. This Sunday when our focus is looking forward to the day when Jesus returns, and everything is made new. A ***new heaven, a new earth***, a new you. That day when sin and death will be no more. The sin that causes such trouble and sorrow; the death that stings so much - no more. It will be ***the home of righteousness***. The home, *our* home, where everything is right.

The holiday season is just about upon us with Thanksgiving this week, and with it the thoughts of many turn to home. Travel plans are made, *I'll Be Home for Christmas* remains a favorite holiday song. But the truth is, our homes here are not homes where everything is right. In fact, they are often far from it. Our homes can be nice places, but they can also be messy places; they can be places of refuge from a harsh world, but the harsh world also often invades our homes. Our homes often have troubles, problems, and sorrows, which the holidays sometimes can make better, but can also make worse.

That's what happens when sinners live in our homes. And they're in all of our homes. And when sinners sin - as they always will - our homes are not places where everything is right. So ***the home of righteousness*** is something to look forward to indeed.

But before that home comes, this home, this old sinful world, must first die. For that is the way of it with God; that's the way He makes all things new - through death and resurrection. That's how makes us new, by joining us to the death and resurrection of Jesus in Holy Baptism. Through water and the Word, drowning and killing the old sinner in us, and then raising to life a new man, to live a new life. And everytime that old sinner reappears and resurfaces, to drown Him again and again in repentance, and strengthening the new man with absolution. A process that continues until the promise of our Baptism is finally fulfilled, when our bodies succumb to death and then are raised new - wholly new, new creations, completely free from sin and death. When our tombs are as empty as Jesus' tomb, and His home become our home, ***the home of righteousness***.

And so it is with the world also - it must die to be made new. We heard of that in the readings today, Isaiah telling us that ***the heavens will vanish like smoke, and the earth***

will wear out like a garment. Jesus said it too - *heaven and earth will pass away,* He said. And this too: *The sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.*

Which all sounds very frightening, and it should. For death is frightening and this is creation dying. But with Jesus, death is not the end. Death is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23) and a creation plunged into sin will die. But Jesus' resurrection means that sin is atoned for, and if sin is conquered, then so is death. And so creation, too, will be re-created, as Isaiah goes on to say, with words very similar to Peter's in the Introit Antiphon: *For behold, I create a new heavens, and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind* (Isaiah 65:17). A new reality. With all things new. ***The home of righteousness.***

But it is not yet. Now we sit at the bedsides of dying family and friends, and we watch our world passing away. But in the midst of death, our Lord has not left us with nothing to hold onto, with nothing of permanency. That would be too much. And so Isaiah tells us that even as the heavens and earth are vanishing and wearing out, that ***[the Lord's] salvation is forever,*** and ***[His] righteousness will never be dismayed.*** His righteousness will never die. Those are words talking about Jesus, for He is the salvation of the Lord. He is the righteousness of God. And because He died and then rose from death, defeating death, He cannot die again (Romans 6:9). And so in an ever-changing and dying world and passing away world, we have something to hold onto: Him. Or as Jesus put it: ***heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.***

And so we hold onto Jesus, the one who cannot die again, by holding onto His words - which will not pass away. Or maybe better to say: Through His Word He hangs on to *us*. His Spirit, working through His Word, working in us, keeping us in the faith, strengthening us, holding us.

And we've been hearing those words of Jesus all through this Church Year now ending.

We heard His words **of forgiveness**, spoken to sinners, prostitutes, paralytics, and even the criminal hanging on the cross next to Him. That same word is spoken to all us sinners gathered here as well.

We heard His words **that give life**, just by the speaking of them, as with all creation - He speaks, and it is so. For they are powerful words. Words that heal lepers, drive out demons, and raise the dead. Those word gives you life as well - now and on the Last Day.

We heard His words that **give food and drink**, as He changes water into wine, multiplies five loaves of bread and two fish to feed over 5,000 people, and His words to His disciples and to us: *This is My Body, This is My Blood. Take and eat.* For you. Words that give you food and life in Him.

We heard His words **of comfort and promise**, that no one will be able to snatch you out of His hand, that He will be with you always, that blessed are you, and that in His Father's house are many rooms and if He is going to prepare a place for you there, He will come back for you too. These words that give us hope.

Then there are His words **spoken by others**. His words in the Old Testament that we see fulfilled in Him. His words spoken through angels. His words through the apostles that teach us still today.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but these words will not - they are eternal words from the eternal one. Words that give us who die eternal life. Words that give us the life of the one who cannot die again. Words that will provide ***a new heavens and a new earth, the home of righteousness***.

And words that can even makes our homes here and now homes of righteousness. Not because we are suddenly going to stop being sinners, but as forgiven sinners speaking that same powerful word of forgiveness to others. Encouraging one another, supporting one another, helping one another, as we heard from Jude. That we give what we have received, Christ speaking and acting through each of us as well. His Word working, restoring the broken, raising the fallen, healing the hurt, comforting the mourning, and giving joy in sorrow.

How important that word, since we know not when that Day of Jesus' return will come. When time will run out and this world will finally die. So ***be on guard, keep awake***, Jesus says. And how do we do that? By hearing and speaking the Word. By holding onto the Word. By living in the Word and living the Word. For that's what the servants do. Prophets, apostles, angels, you and me - it's all about the Word. The Word that created all things in the beginning, the Word made flesh that redeemed all things on the cross, the Word by which the Spirit keeps and sustains us now, and the Word which is coming again on that Last Day. The Word of Him, as Jude again said, ***who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy***.

Blameless . . . glory . . . joy. *That* sounds like the home of righteousness to me. And truly, a home to look forward to. To be home not just for the holidays, for forever. Come, Lord Jesus!

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.