



Ninth Sunday After Pentecost, August 10, 2025

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene
Rev. David Owren

[Isaiah 1:1, 10-20](#)

[Psalms 50:1-8, 23-24](#)

[Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16](#)

[Luke 12:32-40](#)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Friends in Christ,

"A military chaplain told me the following story: "A soldier's little girl, whose father was being moved to a distant post, was sitting at the airport among her family's meager belongings. "The girl was sleepy. She leaned against the packs and duffel bags.

"A lady came by, stopped, and patted her on the head. "'Poor child,' she said. 'You haven't got a home.'

"The child looked up in surprise. "But we do have a home,' she said. 'We just don't have a house to put it in.'"¹

Our home is not a place, a space, a structure. Our home is not where we are, our home is where we're at. And where we're at is a faith community, gathered around Word and Sacrament, worshipping, praying and serving the Holy Trinity, and following Jesus Christ, Who lived, died, and was raised to life again so that we can be at home wherever we go, and welcome others to our home wherever we meet them. Our home is a faith relationship with God and each other; a faith that is not restrained by borders, not restricted by class, race or gender; and not contingent upon our worthiness or worthlessness. Our faith is a gift from God Who calls us, gathers us, and welcomes us to our home in Christ. And our gifted faith-home in Christ is more than "the church you belong to, it is the entire cosmos you live inside of."²

Our faith home is a reminder that all of us yearn for union, starting in the body of our mother, as Fr. Richard Rohr says. "We all came from some kind of home in God that plants a foundational seed of a possible and ideal paradise. ...early abuse or a highly dysfunctional family can severely scar this original blessing, but ironically it sometimes also increases our desire and capacity for it. The archetype of home also points us forward, urging us toward the realization that this hint and taste of union might actually be true and our very goal. It guides

¹ From a Sermon by the Reb, 1981, in Mitch Albom, *Have A Little Faith: A true Story*, 2009, pp. 111-112.

² G.K. Chesterton.

us like an inner compass or a "homing" device. ... We come from God and we return to God and everything in between is a lesson, a seduction, and an invitation."³

New Testament scholar N.T. Wright emphasizes that our faith home is not merely an intellectual assent to a set of propositions or a mental agreement with certain facts. Instead, he views it as a holistic response that encompasses trust, commitment, and action.⁴ In other words, faith is a verb, something you do. Believe in God's promise that the divine presence will never leave you. Commit to the One who gives you life and new life again. Act in ways that others might hear and see the Good News of God's kingdom alive in you.

What is our faith home like? We are confronted with the reality of our own mortality every day. We receive a medical diagnosis that is scary. Family members and friends die. Relationships once healthy are now broken. Financial burdens are increasing. Polarization encourages us to take sides. Hate, violence, and war dominate the headlines. Blaming and scapegoating others is commonplace. We see images of persecution, starvation and genocide on social media right next to videos of how to look younger, feel better and get rich faster.

Our faith home, like any home, can be messy, neglected, even forgotten. When we lose sight of the meaning and joy of our faith, habits, and behaviors descend into ritualism and people lose interest in the community, as the Jewish sage Abraham Joshua Heschel so powerfully described: "It is customary to blame secular science and anti-religious philosophy for the eclipse of religion in modern society. It would be more honest to blame religion for its own defeats. Religion declined not because it was refuted, but because it became irrelevant, dull, oppressive, insipid. When faith is completely replaced by creed, worship by discipline, love by habit; when the crisis of today is ignored because of the splendor of the past; when faith becomes an heirloom rather than a living fountain; when religion speaks only in the name of authority rather than with the voice of compassion—its message becomes meaningless."⁵

We all have our ups and downs. And our faith home often reflects a jagged faith history. Some of us don't like housework. But God isn't done with us yet. There is a cleaning service available. Our Lord and God knows our every feeling and need.

³ Richard Rohr's Meditation: A Homing Device: Both From and Toward, October 9, 2015.

⁴ Wiki, AI, numerous books and lectures.

⁵ Brian D. McClaren, *The Great Spiritual Migration: How the World's Largest Religion Is Seeking a Better Way to Be Christian*, p. 225

In the lessons for today, Isaiah has a vision: God calls out the hypocrisy of a phony relationship, a relationship in which human beings fail miserably to keep the covenant of the Creator. All our worship, offerings, sacrifices, festivals and prayers amount to nothing if we don't "do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow." The Lord says, "Let's hash this out. Don't be a poser! Obey my commandment to love and your sins will be gone." "But if you are willful and stubborn, you'll die like dogs!"⁶

The Psalmist reminds us that the Lord will not be silent and has spoken to us in covenant. Professor Walter Brueggemann describes the covenant that God initiated as a 'gift' to enrich our lives and living; and to give us a special sense of wholeness of life through that 'gift', because we are in a special relationship with God.⁷ Our proper response is praise, thanksgiving and sacrifice. Not to manipulate God, but to respond faithfully to the gift of new life in a "covenant renewal festival" every Sunday in worship and every weekday in service—sharing new life with others.

The author of Hebrews was not naïve about our faith journey. We are called in faith to trust God's promise to us, no matter what. But as one commentator put it: "This faith, ..., is not unrealistic, nor does it deny the real limitations and challenges we face. Faith emerges from recognizing the concreteness of reality, including the forces of entropy and injustice. Faith sees the concrete world as the womb of possibility and imagines that God is presenting us with provocative images of the future, even when these seem unlikely at the moment. Trusting God's vision, the widest horizon of hope, faith trusts that the moral arc of history will come to pass, despite our current waywardness. God's vision is more powerful than our recalcitrance."⁸ We all may die before we see the consummation of God's kingdom here on earth, but in faith we are called to share this promise with others.

Jesus exhorts us to "Be awake...because at any moment, God comes looking for an open door and ready servants. Once God steps in, it is not to demand and be served, but to serve. We are the little flock, those ready servants. With God, we can make the world better, one moment at a time. Store up your treasures in heaven by bringing the realm of God to life [to earth] here and now."⁹

⁶ Eugene Peterson, *The Message*.

⁷ Joan Stott, *The Timeless Psalms, A Personal Meditation*, 2016, thetimelesspsalms.net.

⁸ Bruce Epperly, *The Adventurous Lectionary*, August 11, 2019.

⁹ Rev. Dr. Nichole Torbitzky, processandfaith.org, August 11, 2019.

The Good News of the Kingdom of God is a gift to be shared. And the best way to share our gift with others is one person at a time. I may never meet the people you meet and vice -versa. We do not share the same opportunities. But it is imperative to share this Good News with all those we meet, regardless of circumstance. Our faith home door must always open to welcome those who have not experienced the Good News of God's new kingdom.

A devout Christian man dies and goes to heaven. At the pearly gates he meets St. Peter who asks him, "What's the password?"

Somewhat dumbfounded, the man replies, "The just shall live by faith."

St. Peter said, "No. That's not it."

The man tries a second time, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

Again, St. Peter said, "No."

The man tries a third time, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

"No," said St. Peter.

Finally, in exasperation, the man blurts out, "I give up!"

"That's it," shouted St. Peter, "come on in!"

You see, faith is a gift from God. You and I don't earn it. Because of this gift faith, we are able to prepare for our Lord's coming when we let go.

Let go of our plans, which we think are the best ever conceived;

Let go of our schemes, which are always best for other people;

Let go of our views, which are always correct;

Let go of our motives, which are always beyond question;

Let go of our designs, which are always so good they should be patented;

Let go of our habits, which are always above reproach;

Let go of our desires, which are always as pure as the driven snow;

Let go of our wishes, which always have to be fulfilled;

Remember the mighty promise of God, "I will never leave you. I will always be with you. Even when you think you're alone, you're not. Even when you feel abandoned, you're not. Even when tragedy strikes you head on, I am there with you. And on the day you die, I am the first to cradle you in my arms of resurrected life!"

Today and every day, pray for the ability to discern the presence of God, because, as one person said, "life is short and you're old before you know it."

- Life is short, so live every day as if it were your last, because some day you'll be right.
- Life is short, so wake up, stay alert, be prepared, light the lamps, get ready. Listen for the knock, answer the call, serve where you're sent.
- Life is short, so do what you love to do and give it your best. Whether it's business or teaching or medicine, if you don't love what you're doing and can't give it your best, think seriously about getting out of it.
- Life is short, so recognize that today is the only day you have, eat dessert first, read good books.
- Life is short, so go to church and worship, stay awake, and sing.
- Life is short, so tell the truth, take care of this day, dance.
- Life is short, so listen to the people you love, tell them how much they mean to you, visit someone else's mother in the nursing home.
- Life is short, so recognize that every day is a special occasion, do something interesting, have some fun, and choose to be happy.
- Life is short, so forgive. Look past the faults of others just like you hope they will do for you.
- Life is short, so surround yourself with gracious people, hug your friends, care for someone you haven't cared for.
- Life is short, so be courageous, take a chance, live so that when your life flashes before your eyes, you'll have plenty to watch.
- Life is short, so embrace the possibilities, try something new, see that every day is an opportunity, dream, but don't just dream, follow those dreams.
- Life is short, so breathe and think deeply, don't give your heart to that which won't fill your heart, make the changes that will make the difference.
- Life is short, so celebrate God's eternity, make time for the things that matter, don't leave yourself regretting things you didn't do.
- Life is short, so be an evangelist, tell a friend how God's love has changed your life, be a person who talks about Jesus and lives like Jesus.

Pray hard, feast on the body and blood of Christ, live your baptismal vows. By faith, believe that the Kingdom of God is given to you each day. By faith, with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, celebrate the love of God. By faith, get a life that mirrors God's unstoppable love. It's later than you think and life is short. So open the door of your faith and

say to the stranger, the sick, the abused, the lonely, the oppressed, the poor, the outcast, the ignored, and the forgotten, say to them: “Welcome home!”¹⁰ Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹⁰ [Brett Younger: Life Is Short](#), Sunday August 07, 2016. [The Rev. Dr. Brett Younger](#)
Organization: McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University, Atlanta, GA.