

“Back Home Again!”—Isaiah 45:4-6

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Back Home Again!”, is Isaiah 45:4-6 → *For the sake of My servant Jacob, and Israel My chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides Me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know Me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides Me; I am the LORD, and there is no other.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

“Home is where the heart is.” What does this clichè mean to you? One thought is that your home will always be the place for which you feel deep affection, no matter where you are. From immigrants who may still long for the land of their birth to children who experience “homesickness” while away at camp, the heart longs to feel a sense of belonging and security. Such a concept even surfaces when parents talk about their adult children “coming home” and the adult children talk about “going home,” even if they’ve lived “away from home” for quite some time.

However, the meaning of this clichè will depend upon your definition of

“home.” Most of the time it is not just a matter of longing for a place and the stuff connected to that place. While that does have a part in what makes up a home the definition of home for most people centers around relationships. **It has to do with the relationships which develop in that place amongst all the stuff.**

Of utmost importance is the development of the relationship with Jesus Christ in the midst all the dynamics which make up a “home.” In our house we have a plaque which reads: “Christ is the Head of this house; The Unseen Guest at every meal; The Silent Listener to every conversation.” It is a reminder that relationships in a home involve more than just us. They involve **our identity** in the relationship God has made with us **in Christ!**

In our text God’s people were displaced from their homeland because they forgot that home is more about relationship with Yahweh than themselves. Through their exile into captivity in Babylon God showed His people what “home” really was—not a place but a relationship with Himself! Their hearts had turned away from faith in the LORD which displayed itself in various ways. For many it was outright rebelliousness and refusal to acknowledge Yahweh in unbelief. They would reject His prophets who, by speaking the LORD’s Law, strove to bring their hearts back home again to the LORD by repentance and faith. For many it was going the “religious route”—having the right words and

rituals and bringing their regular sacrifices to the priests as they went through their liturgical motions. In return, they only asked that Yahweh keep His nose out of the rest of their lives. Many gave God everything He wanted— except their hearts.

Isaiah 42:24-25 describes how they brought this captivity upon themselves because of their sin as the LORD raised up the king of Babylon to displace them from their homeland. It says: *Who gave up Jacob to the looter, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the LORD, against Whom we have sinned, in Whose ways they would not walk, and Whose law they would not obey? So He poured on him the heat of His anger and the might of battle; it set him on fire all around, but he did not understand; it burned him up, but he did not take it to heart.* Their captivity made their sin more of a reality to them, confronting them about their relationship with the LORD **and still it was quite awhile before they finally repented because they were too “at home” with their faithlessness!**

“Home” for God’s people is always defined by the relationship of grace **by which He has brought us to Himself** and desires to keep us with Him always. Our text reveals to us the LORD’s desire to bring His people back home again through Cyrus, King of Persia, whom He refers to as *His anointed*. In verses 4-5 Yahweh says that He chose and equipped Cyrus for the

deliverance of His *chosen* people even though Cyrus did not have a faith relationship with Him. This actually could have appeared very confusing to God's people. Using a Gentile king who didn't *know* the LORD (i.e. the king of Babylon) to discipline Israel and then using another king who didn't *know* the LORD (i.e. Cyrus, king of Persia) to overthrow the king of Babylon and deliver God's people? And then referring to Cyrus as *His anointed*—the meaning of the Hebrews word for “messiah?”

Notice the text states the reason for the LORD acting through a rather “strange” servant. What the LORD would do through Cyrus would be a witness to the whole world! Yahweh expressed His desire in verse 6 of our text: *that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides Me; I am the LORD, and there is no other.* Yahweh is God and there is no other god besides Him! Even through this deliverance by the LORD through Cyrus Israel would fulfill their purpose of revealing Yahweh to the other nations who were steeped in their religions filled with false gods! The LORD wants all people come back home again in a loving, forgiving, gracious relationship with Himself forever!

By the way, this deliverance was accomplished in 539 BC and the people didn't just come home to Jerusalem but, more importantly, they came home to the relationship with the LORD which was connected to this city and its

temple! This deliverance which the LORD accomplished through Cyrus in 539 BC foreshadowed our deliverance from our slavery to sin, death and the devil which took place around 30 AD. The difference was that Jesus took the punishment for our sin upon Himself so that we could be delivered and be at home in the heavenly promised land forever!

God the Father has chosen us to be His “children” to live in a relationship with Him day by day—to be “at home” with Him. It was a choice of His grace which also took place through *His Anointed*, Jesus, the Christ! (“Christ” is the Greek word for “anointed one.”) This choice happens through His means of grace: In His Gospel through which the Holy Spirit creates faith in *His Anointed*—Jesus; In baptism where He gives us His Holy Spirit and faith in the Christ—*His Anointed One*; In the Lord’s Supper where we receive forgiveness in the body and blood of *His Anointed*, proclaiming His *death until He comes* back again to take us to be at home with Him eternally; In the Absolution pronounced by His Church, forgiving sins in the stead of Christ.

Describing us—Christ’s Church—1 Peter 2:9 says we are a ***chosen race*** and a royal ***priesthood***. We are a people for His own possession, that we may proclaim the excellencies of Him Who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light! We are chosen by His grace and love to bring Christ to the world and the world to Christ!

How do you respond to this choice by God? With self-righteous pride, as if you have “the corner” on God—kind of like you have control of Him? Or with humility, bowing before Him in repentance and recognizing that you are undeserving of this choice of grace? Such repentant humility recognizes that **He controls you!** This sacrifice of God’s Anointed One—Jesus—perpetually stands for you so that you can be “at home” with the LORD forever. Hebrews 10:10 says that it was the very will of Jesus that we be *sanctified through the offering of His body . . . **once for all.*** God sent Jesus, the Christ—*His Anointed*—as the One Who has conquered satan and his captivity of sin and has brought us “back home again” **and continues to do so daily!!**

Thus, whenever you don’t feel “at home” with the LORD because satan is tempting you with doubts . . . whenever you don’t feel “at home” with the LORD because you have fallen into temptation and sinned . . . whenever you don’t feel “at home” with the LORD because you feel unworthy of His grace . . . the LORD continues to hold out to you *His Anointed* and the complete victory which He has accomplished for you **once for all sin, for all time!** In Christ the LORD fulfills His purpose as expressed in our text: *that YOU may know . . . that there is no god besides . . . the LORD* upon Whom you can depend for deliverance, forgiveness and being “at home” with Him forever in a new life!

“Home is where the heart is?” Absolutely . . . when it comes to the heart of

Yahweh for His people! It has to do with His Holy Spirit's work based upon His promise of what He will do in us according to Ezekiel 36:26-27 → ***I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey My rules. Amen.***

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