

**“Living at home” a sermon based on John 14:1-14 and 1 Peter 2:2-10  
preached by Kerry Enright at Knox Church Dunedin New Zealand on 10 May  
2020**

**It can be accessed from the Knox Church YouTube Channel**

*<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYksSjG0llf00NeogNIGs7A>*

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Prayer – Living Christ, we ask you to show us the way, to reveal the truth and to share your life with us, that we may live with you all our days. In Christ we pray. Amen.

Feijoas. Wherever we live, we plant feijoa trees. We have planted two trees here in Dunedin. We planted two trees in Sydney, although there they were called pineapple guava. Why feijoas? Growing up, we always had feijoa trees in our backyards, and they produced abundantly. When we visited my mother, we were always treated to beautifully preserved feijoas. We had them on weetbix for breakfast and with ice-cream for desert. Lots of feijoas. So for our family, feijoa came to mean home. The taste, the smell, the look - evoking memories of warm hospitality, affectionate hugs, abundant food, enduring love – all that we would associate with home, and this weekend, all we might associate with loving mothers.

What reminds you of home? For the first disciples, it was eating and drinking together. As they sat at the table and broke bread and drank wine, they remembered the meals they had shared with Jesus including that troubled meal before he was betrayed, and the resurrection meal at Emmaus when they recognised him after death. The taste, the smell, the interactions – memories of home.

What home though? Remember that because there was no room in the inn, Jesus had been born in a manger. And it is said in the scriptures that Jesus had nowhere to lay his head. In their travelling Jesus and his followers relied on people’s hospitality. They stayed in people’s homes. So with this insecure life as a backdrop, Jesus says “In my father’s house there are many dwelling places.”

Caroline Lewis of Luther Seminary points out that at the time of Jesus there weren’t motels or hotels or camping grounds. There were inns, but they were very unhygienic and people did not like to stay in them. When people travelled and needed accommodation, it was common for someone to be sent ahead to secure a place to stay for the night, and the place to stay was in someone’s home.

Archaeological excavations have revealed a variety of house designs, depending on how wealthy or poor people were. They were normally centred on a courtyard. And some of the houses had many dwelling places, rooms in which families or travelling groups could stay, houses to which dwelling places were added. Mostly single storied houses and not strong - but safe and secure. In their travelling, Jesus and his followers relied on being able to stay in such dwelling places.

So Jesus uses the image of Jesus going ahead to secure a place for his followers to stay, for us to stay. That place is here and now. And not a place, but a relationship with Jesus who is one with the Father and who is the presence of God with us. This isn't an image about what happens when we die or about heaven. It is an image about Jesus securing a place in God's life for us to abide.

The disciples needed that word of security. They were unnerved and unsettled. "I tell you, Jesus said, one of you will betray me." They looked around. Which person, one of the inner circle, one of them, so much part of the group that they did not know which of the twelve it was, clearly someone they knew and trusted, with whom they ate and drank, who had journeyed with them. And then, just before these verses, Jesus predicts that Simon Peter will deny him. Two of the twelve. The group was falling like dominoes. Who was next? Jesus settles them by reminding them of the home he has secured for them, within God's love.

Peter's letter shifts the image from the house of God to the household of God. He was writing to a community made up of people who had been displaced and dispossessed, not just spiritually or religiously, but socially, economically and politically. God creates a new place for those who have none, a dwelling place for people who have tasted that the Lord is good. This new home is a spiritual home, made of living stones, people who have been encountered by the risen Christ.

These images are especially relevant for us as we move from a time of displacement and contemplate physically meeting in a building again. These last weeks have involved a wonderful living out of this text, of being dwelling places within God's house, widely dispersed. We have been reminded that church buildings are not the houses of God. The house of God is people living in relationship with Jesus, within the life of God. As we live out that relationship, God makes us a household, God's own people. The Communion reminds us of who we are and what Jesus has secured for us in God. And so we remember home. Thanks be to God.

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