



DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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THE JOURNEY [week 2]. . .

MY HEART — CHRIST'S HOME

February 27, 2005 - Rev. Stephen Bringardner

Scriptures: Ephesians 3:16-17a, John 14:23, Revelation 3:20

INTRODUCTION

On our JOURNEY, we come to a house by the side of the road. On any kind of journey, in which there are swamps, forests, mountains, it's good to know there are safe havens. . .stopping off points.

Isn't that what our homes are? A place of refuge from the storms of life. A place of retreat where we can let our hair down, relax, be ourselves. Our homes are "safe places". . .sanctuaries, if you please. . .where we can find shelter.

[I know many homes are where the battle rages, sadly. That will be our focus another time.]

As we come to the place in our journey marked "SAFE HAVEN", what does that look like? What does that translate to in our human experience? I want to put forth the idea that our heart is a home. They say that "*home is where the heart is*"; I guess I'm saying the reverse of that is true too (i.e.: our hearts are a home).

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes these words [\[in Ephesians 3:16-17a\]](#):

*"I pray that out of His glorious riches He [God] may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that **Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.**"*

Or, as another has translated:

"That Christ may settle down and be at home in your hearts by faith." [Weymouth]

It's a remarkable doctrine of the Christian faith that Jesus himself through the Holy Spirit actually will enter our hearts. . .dwell there. . .make His home there. Christ will live in any heart that welcomes Him.

Look at what he says in [John 14:23](#):

*"If anyone loves Me, he will obey my teaching [keep my word], and **we will come to him and make our home with him.**"*

Incomprehensible! Until PENTECOST—when the Spirit of the living, resurrected Christ was given to the Church and they experienced what He had foretold. Then they understood that God did not dwell in any temple made with hands. Now, through the outpoured Spirit:

- The body of the believer had become the temple of the living God;
- The human heart had become the home of Jesus Christ.

It would be difficult to think of a higher privilege that each of us has than to make for Christ a home in our heart. . .to welcome, serve, please, know Him there.

I will never forget the day I invited Jesus into my heart. I was a junior high kid (about 13). I was at a camp, not unlike Spring Hill, and it was like going through a car wash—only the cleansing I experienced was on the inside.

Do you remember the day. . .the hour. . .the setting?

- For some, it happened (or, has been happening) over a long period of time—one suitcase at a time. Nothing particularly spectacular.
- For others, Jesus' coming into your heart was as dramatic as the day JFK was shot.

Here's how one writer described it:

“He came into the darkness of my heart and turned on the light. He built a fire in the cold hearth and banished the chill. He started music where there had been stillness and harmony where there had been discord. He filled the emptiness with his own loving fellowship.”

This is, of course, the first step in making your heart Christ's home—the INVITATION. One of the most amazing verses in all the Bible is what Jesus declares in **Revelation 3:20**:

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”

Every other religion in the world has us reaching up, clamoring, banging on God's door begging for admittance. Here, God the Son is knocking on our door. . .seeking entrance into our lives. . .and yearning for a relationship with us.

So it is that we invite Christ to come into our hearts. It's like inviting someone you cherish and esteem into your home—to stay (not just visit). And you say, *“Let me take you around. . .show you some of the features.”* That's what we're going to do this morning.

[Let me say that what follows is based on a little booklet that has been a source of encouragement to many on their spiritual journey. It is an allegory entitled: **MY HEART—CHRIST'S HOME**. It likens our hearts to the houses we live in. As we walk through a few of the rooms this morning, think how these correspond to the rooms in your heart—Christ's home.]

THE STUDY

The first room we come to is the Study—the LIBRARY. The Library corresponds to the MIND. In a sense, it is the “control room” of the whole house. In my home, it's the LOFT, which is a pretty open area. We pride ourselves in being “open minded” (i.e.: able to take in many ideas, images and thoughts). I wonder:

- What is on the shelves of our mind? What ideas, plans, schemes?
- What trains of thought go round & round in this room?
- What pictures hang on the walls of our minds?
- What imaginations color the contour of this room?
- What ideas (in books & magazines) do we expose ourselves to?
- What thoughts do we allow in and dwell upon?

- What internet sites do we visit?
- What movies & music shape the images in our minds?

Jesus wants us to have clean minds and a pure heart!

So, if you have difficulty controlling the images, the thoughts, the streams of consciousness:

- Throw out all the material you are exposed to that is not true, good, pure, or helpful.
- Bring Christ into this room, and bring your thoughts under His control.
- Let the awareness of His presence, purity, power push back wrong & impure thoughts.
- Pack the library of your mind with the Word of God (read it, study it, meditate on it).

[\[see Philippians 4:8\]](#)

THE DINING ROOM

The Dining Room is the room of APPETITES & DESIRES.

It's a large room. We spend a lot of time there, trying to satisfy our hungers. It's one of my favorite rooms.

What's on the table? Money / Academic Degrees / Stocks / Property / Positions with power / Relationships / Accomplishments / Recognition?

Good stuff! But not really the kind of food which would feed the soul or satisfy true spiritual hunger.

Jesus, when He comes into this room in our lives, says: *"I have food to eat you do not know of. My food is to do the will of Him who sent me"* [\[see John 4:32 & 34\]](#)

That means to live a PURPOSE-DRIVEN LIFE: A life driven by worship. . .fellowship. . .the pursuit of holiness. . .ministry. . .and mission. Living for His purposes (as though they were our meat & drink) takes us away from self-centered absorption, in which we strive only for our own desires, ambitions, and satisfactions.

Seek to please, honor, serve, and glorify Him in all you do. That is "food" that will truly satisfy!!!

THE LIVING ROOM [\[This is where I want to spend some time this morning\]](#)

A quiet, comfortable room with a warm atmosphere. Imagine a fireplace, sofa, a couple overstuffed chairs, a bookcase, maybe even a piano. It's a warm, intimate place. A place that's secluded and quiet. . .a place where you can have heart-to-heart talks and deep sharing.

[Unfortunately, we don't use our living rooms much any more. . .only for "formal" occasions.]

In the living room of our hearts, Jesus wants to meet us and spend time with us everyday. All you have to do is show up.

When we first come to know Christ (i.e.: invite him to dwell in our hearts), we visit that room regularly :

- There are wonderful times of prayer & meditation.
- We can't get enough of His Word; it's so exciting to see it work in our lives.

- It seems like our relationship with Jesus grows a little more everyday.

But little by little, with the passage of time and the pressures & demands of many responsibilities, this time begins to be shortened. It's not like it was deliberate; it just happens. We begin to miss days now & then. . .then more often . . .then whole blocks of days. So many matters of urgency demand our attention and crowd out this quiet time.

So here He (Jesus) is, an occupant of my home. Morning comes and I'm rushing down the stairs and out the door. Do you get the picture? I pass right by the living room, and there He is sitting in there. . .stoking a fire in the fireplace. . .waiting for me. But I rush on out.

Oh, it is so hard to turn into that Living Room. . .hard to spend time alone with God. . .hard to maintain focus. . .hard to sit alone, to think, to feel. There are so many distractions.

Here's a question to ponder this morning: **How does God speak to you? How do you hear from the Lord?** Many of us have never seriously answered that question.

- Does He speak in the events of our lives? [YES, of course!]
- Does He speak through a Bible study (either one we're doing on our own or one we're doing in a small group). . .or perhaps a sermon. . .something that someone says. . . something we read? [YES! YES!]
- Does He speak through a "multitude of counselors". . .through those mentoring or discipling us? [YES, so long as they are Christ-centered and Bible-based]
- Does He speak through the doctrines of the church (i.e.: "*the combined voice of Spirit-filled people*")? [You bet He does!]

But I wonder, does God ever speak directly to us through the Holy Spirit in the quietness of the Living Room?

YES, I believe He does. But I have to work at it. [And I'm going to be personal here.] I have to resist the wandering of thoughts back to what's on the agenda for the day. I do allow a portion of time to think through what I've got ahead of me; that's how I organize my day. Then I consciously set that aside, and focus on one thing: JESUS. His love. . .His goodness. . .His forgiveness. I just wait quietly in His presence.

Just the other day, I brought an issue I was struggling with to Him, placed it before Him, and waited. . .waited. . .waited. You don't have to fill your mind with a whole lot of verbiage. Just wait in His presence. Just BE in His presence; don't worry about saying anything. Don't fill the so-called "void" with words. Let Him have a chance to speak. Listen! And He will, if your heart is ready to receive.

Someone might ask: "*Well, how do you know that what you hear is not the ramblings of your own thoughts. . .that it is truly the Lord speaking to you?*"

I believe I've come up with a sure-fire way of telling: Get with your spouse or a close friend and share what God is saying to you. And if they say to you—as Marcie did to me this week: "*Wow, Steve, that's really good! Where'd that come from? You couldn't have come up with that on your own.*" Then you know you're on the right track. Works every time. [SMILE]

CONCLUSION

There are other rooms—but we don't have time for them this morning.

Here are some tips for a fruitful time with God:

1. Set a definite time (a time when you will be most alert).

2. Choose a quiet place where you won't be disturbed (doesn't have to be the Living Room).
3. Start out with just 10-15 minutes. Don't overwhelm yourself.
4. If you do nothing more than intone JESUS' name, that's enough.
5. Be habitual. But remember, it takes about 6 weeks to develop a new habit.
6. Vary the things you do during your QT (quiet time). [INCLUDE such things as Bible reading, listening to a worship CD, writing something (a poem?) to express your praise to God, meditating on a single verse or passage of Scripture.]
7. Write down in a journal what you are learning about (and from) God and what you believe He wants you to do. [Is it to respond in a specific act of obedience? Offer Him praise? Accept His forgiveness? Bow before Him in repentance?]

In a moment, we are going to go to prayer. I would like you to select one of the three rooms and ask, "What do I need (need to do) in that room this morning?"

LIBRARY: Ask Him to make over this room. Ask Him to help you shape it up and change it to the way it ought to be. Perhaps agree to throw some harmful "media" out and bring in something different. Ask Him to take control of your mind, your thoughts, and your imagination.

DINING ROOM: Change the menu—to something that won't leave you hungry or thirsty. Remember, Jesus said that those who come to Him will never go hungry, and those who believe on Him will never be thirsty. [\[John 6:35\]](#)

The Prophet Isaiah once said: "Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me! Eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that you may live." [\[Isaiah 55:1\]](#)

LIVING ROOM: Talk to the Lord about your struggle to stay consistent. Ask His forgiveness, if need be. Ask Him also to show you how He is producing the change of character and perspective you long for in your life.

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PARTING THOUGHT

Remember, Christ seeks our presence: NOT because He needs us, BUT because He loves us. . .has redeemed us (at no small cost to himself). . .and wants to journey with us.

So, don't let Christ wait alone in the Living Room of your heart. Every day find a time & place—and with the Word of God and prayer be together with Him. May your fellowship be sweet!