

Sunday Morning Meditation

May 10, 2020 – Fifth Sunday of Easter

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When you want to go home?

Scripture Passage – [1 Peter 2:1-10](#)

I want you to close your eyes and just simply imagine a few scenarios with me. I want you to imagine that it has been a long, hard day at work. Employees, bosses, customers, all sounding like an unhappy choir, have made your day long and hard. As you begin to leave, all you can think about is going home. Or imagine that you have been preparing for a family celebration after many years of being away from home. It is your parents 50th wedding anniversary and you are filled with joyful anticipation as you round the last corner and head down the street to the home where you were raised. Or imagine that it is September 11, 2001. Most of us who were mature enough can remember where we were when the twin towers started to come down, and we can remember where we wanted to be. In the midst of that crisis, we wanted to be at home and we wanted our whole family at home with us.

We all share the desire to find our way home, whether it's at the end of a long day or at the end of a long journey, a long time of wandering, of alienation, of homesickness and pain. We all share the desire, the longing for home.

When you want to go home, what are you longing for? Are you longing for a place of acceptance and love? Are you longing for that place where you are trusted and understood? Are you longing for that place that feels like a refuge from the troubles of life? A fortress against the hardships of life? When you want to go home, what are you longing for?

It is interesting to me that Peter, in this passage, used the metaphor of a household for the building that is being constructed using the Living Stone

and the living stones. Peter could've used the word Temple or tabernacle or *ekklusia*, church. But Peter didn't, he used the word "household".

Now the simplest explanation for the use of this term is the fact that the early church met to worship and fellowship in their homes. And even though this is true, we also know that they continued to gather in the Temple for worship, and the NT authors use other terms for the church than household. So I think Peter used the term household, because he wanted to dip into the power that the image of home possesses.

Thanks to mom, and there is my first shout out to all the moms who are tuning in today! Thanks to mom, and dad, our homes are places of love, acceptance, trust, growth, safety and so much more. Our homes are perhaps the most important places in our lives, and Peter knows this. So he dips into all the emotional and spiritual power the image of home evokes, and talks about the church being a household.

Now in I Peter, Peter talks about many of the key characteristics of the spiritual household we know as the church. Peter's list is not exhaustive, but his list does give us insights into the foundations of the church.

First, the church is founded on and built around, Jesus Christ. Using two different metaphors for Jesus, Peter emphasizes that Jesus is both the foundation the church is built upon and the cornerstone that we are built around. Peter seems to go to great lengths to make sure we understand the centrality of Jesus to the church. Without Jesus as the center, there is no church in Peter's mind. Jesus is the foundation, the center, the source, the cornerstone, the beginning, middle and end of the church.

Now at least, in part, what this means is that for the church to be the church, we need to maintain the centrality of Jesus. It is so easy for other realities, such as our historical identity as Mennonites or as Zachary alluded to in yesterday's reflection, the State. It is so easy for other realities to become the center that defines who we are. But with zeal and determination, we need to make sure that Jesus, his teachings, his life and ministry, his death and resurrection, they are the defining, life-giving center of the church.

Second, the church is a place for growth. Notice that Peter emphasized that like newborn babies, we long for spiritual milk that will help us grow up

in our salvation. We have in the church today, a very false and twisted understanding of salvation. All too often we think salvation is something that happens or happened at a point in time. We believed, we said a prayer, and we were saved. End of story. But Peter talks about salvation as a reality that we grow up into. Salvation certainly has a beginning, but the beginning is just that, it is the beginning, The beginning is not the middle and the end. The beginning of salvation is the beginning of a life-long process of growing deeper and deeper into salvation. And in order to grow spiritually, we need pure spiritual milk just like babies need their mother's real milk. Churches that do not challenge their members to grow in their salvation, to go deeper into the teachings of Jesus and the person of Jesus on whom the church is built, such churches are not fulfilling their calling as the church.

If a church only puts us at ease with our lives as they are, then such a church is not a true church. If a church only puts us at ease with our presuppositions and our comforting compromises in faith, then perhaps such a church is not truly a church. If a church only puts us at ease with the sin of our lives, offering forgiveness without transformation, then perhaps such a church is not truly a church. This passage emphasizes that the church is a place of transformation (once you were not a people, now you are a people) and a place of growth.

There are so many other attributes of the church that we could develop this morning. What it means to be a royal priesthood and a holy nation. What it means to be God's chosen people. (If we remember that Peter's audience was a group of dispossessed people, people who had no unifying dignity and identity apart from being a church, the power of these words expands in our hearing.)

But let me close with this: In this passage Peter's image of the church is an image of a body of believers who are always under construction. WRMC was not built in 1899 or 1963 or in 2006 when your suffering with me as Pastor began. Warwick River Mennonite Household is still under construction. Peter intentionally used the present indicative verb to emphasize that the building, the constructing of God's church is an ongoing, day in and day out process. Warwick River Mennonite Household is being built right now and will continue to be built long after we are all gone from this place. We ourselves become part of the very "structure,"

the home, the spiritual house that First Peter speaks of, as we, like living stones, are brought together to build the house.

Our congregation is called to be a safe haven, a refuge, a place of dignity and identity for those who seek a church home, with beliefs, stories, sufferings, and joys sunk deep into the foundations of our shared experience. In what ways is God calling our church household of faith to become more open to new living stones being added to our household?

I want to close the way we began. I want you to think about a memory that captures the essence of the love, hope, joy, comfort, etc... that your mother created in your home. With that memory in your mind, I want you to consider how we can bring the reality your memory captures to life in our church home. Soon we will be going home. Returning to a (more) normal way of gathering in the Warwick River Mennonite Household. As we gather, how can we make our shared spiritual household a place of grace, love, comfort, safety, confession, forgiveness, hope....