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First Belton
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Series: Power of Moments

Title: Home is Closer than We Think

Text: John 6:47-51, 53, 67-69; 16:7; 14:21-23, 15-17, 26; 16:13-15; 14:18, 27; 15:26-27; 16:8

Let's play a little trivia. What do you think is America's all-time favorite animated movie? Here are your options: (*chart: Little Mermaid, 1989; Beauty and the Beast, 1991; Toy Story, 1995; Frozen, 2013; Lion King, 1994*). Hint: It's a pretty close race.

Based on popularity, cultural impact, and box office sales, the answer is *Lion King*. It is interesting though the stories that each of these movies tell, isn't it? The *Little Mermaid* believed that life would be found if only she had legs and were a human. *Beauty and the Beast* tells the story that life is found if I can find true love. *Toy Story* is about finding life in companionship. *Frozen* tells the story of life being found in freedom and self-discovery. As a culture, we are fascinated with answering the question, "How do we find life and happiness?" What we are really asking is, "How do I find peace and rest for my weary soul in the brokenness around me?"

In John 6, the disciples have been walking with Jesus for a short time, and they come face-to-face with this question. Jesus has just fed the five thousand on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He has just walked on water, and as the crowds continue to gather to hear from Him; He begins to challenge them. In John 6:47 Jesus tells them, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven, if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I give for the life of the world is my flesh."*

Oh, it gets better. He continues in v. 53, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Oh boy... this is the moment where things begin to change a bit. Countless Jews have begun to gather around Jesus, attempting to figure out who He really is. Now, Jesus makes himself synonymous with the bread in the wilderness. Remember that story? God rescues the Jews from slavery in Egypt, takes them into the wilderness to experience Him, and in desperation for food they call out to Him for help, and He sends manna from Heaven to sustain them. Jesus tells them the manna in the wilderness was for temporary sustenance and that manna was nothing more than a foretaste, so to speak, of the *true bread* that is coming. He tells them, "I am the true manna in the wilderness, that while that manna only provided sustenance for a time, I provide sustenance forever." In other words, He offers true and eternal life. So, if you want to find life, then eat my flesh and drink my blood.

As you might imagine, the crowds immediately dissipated. He is just another crazy self-proclaiming prophet; this guy is nuts!

As the crowds departed, Jesus looked to the twelve and asked them in v. 67, *“Do you want to go away as well?”* And notice how Peter answers; I love it. He says in response, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”*

What a powerful moment for the disciples. Over the course of their time together, before Jesus ever told them He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life, they had come to believe that He was the way back to God, the truth about God, and He offered life in God. So much so, they declared Jesus the only way to life. *“Where else would we go? What else can we pursue?”*

The disciples figured out what we have been asking for years! *Home is not as far as we might think.* Where can life and peace be found? Only in Jesus.

I think about this regularly. We know that Jesus' time on earth was two thousand years ago. Truthfully, it is hard for me to conceptualize two thousand years. I mean, think about how much has changed in that time. The disciples walked around everywhere they went. It would take days for them to travel in their region. Whereas, in approximately 14-15 hours, I can leave Dallas, Texas, and be in Beijing, China. In their day, literacy was a privilege. Today, we have artificial intelligence. Two thousand years ago, they had no A/C, no heat, no electricity, no internet. We lose power for two days, and we think the world is over. Yet, we have all this, and we are the most anxious people, living in the most anxious time in U.S. history.

So, when we hear that Jesus is the answer, I don't know about you, but sometimes it can feel as though the Jesus I read about can't relate to the life and times in which I live. *Nevertheless, home is a lot closer than we might think.*

Remember, Jesus has told His disciples that He is getting ready to leave. In many ways, the text seems to indicate that they are feeling a bit abandoned, and in this moment, Jesus tells them in John 16:7, *“I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away.”*

You may be thinking what the disciples are thinking, *“There is no way!”* There have been so many times in my life that I have been envious of the disciples and thought, *“Man, if I could just see Him. If I could just hear Him say, ‘You're doing well, keep going.’”* To see His humor, feel His angst over the world, to see His expressions in everyday life. They had all that!! How can it be that it is to their advantage that He goes away?

Here is the answer - you ready? This is powerful. In John 14:21, Jesus tells them, *"Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him (and hear this) and will manifest myself to him."*

To this, Judas, another of the disciples (not Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus), asked him a great question (v.22), *"Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?"*

Simply put, "How are you going to do this?"

Jesus answers in John 14:23. Look closely because here is the big answer to all our questions: *"If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and **we** will come to him and (hear this) we will make our **home** with him."*

Home is not as far as we might think. For those who have received Jesus, who have believed that He is the way back to God, He is the truth about God, and He offers life in God, Jesus says, for those folks the Father and the Son will come and take up residence in their life. They will move into your life and make it their home, meaning *we don't have to go looking for peace and rest, peace and rest have found us.*

Moving into a new home is interesting, isn't it? It can be pretty exciting; it is new and different, but it is also strange. The house has a different smell, has a different feel, and doesn't necessarily "look like you." But over time, the house becomes a home. In the same way, as we accept Christ and begin following Him as our King and living in obedience to His Word, He begins to make our lives His home.

Here are some of the implications of God the Father and the Son taking up residence in our lives by giving us the Holy Spirit.

Obedience. In 14:15, Jesus says, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him."* One of the things that is incredible about Jesus' leaving is that, in return, we get a "Helper." That word is translated as counselor or guide. And we might have the temptation to think that the Helper is some kind of resource from Jesus, when in reality, it is another of the same kind, meaning that Jesus' taking up residence in our life is not Him sending someone else, but a Helper that is Himself. This "Helper" is going to help us love God and follow His commandments.

So much so that Jesus says we have in the Holy Spirit a personal tutor. V. 26, *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."* This had to be reassuring for the disciples, who, more

often than not, left Jesus thinking, "What in the world did that mean?" We, too, can read our Bibles and think, "Boy, I have no idea what that means." However, with the Holy Spirit, we have a guide into all truth, to help us understand His Word, to help us navigate between what is true in the world and what is false.

Jesus continues in 16:13, *"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."*

Through the Holy Spirit it is like always having Artificial Intelligence whose source is not the internet but God himself and is never wrong.?

Security. In 14:18, He tells them, *"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."* In the latter half of v. 17, Jesus tells them this "Helper," He will dwell with you, and will be in you forever, meaning that if you are His, then you have been adopted into His family. He has made His home with you, and there is nothing that you can do to lose Him. That means He will never get tired of living there. He will never get bored or see something bigger or better and think, "I would rather move over there to that neighborhood or have that house." He never leaves.

Peace. By giving us the Holy Spirit, Jesus says in 14:27, *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."* In the Spirit, we receive the peace of Christ that Paul says is a kind of peace that surpasses all understanding. And it is a peace that we don't have to go get or find somewhere but have because Jesus has taken up residence in our lives through the Holy Spirit. We simply yield to the peace that we have in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The reason why we don't or may not always experience it is because we simply do not yield to that which is ours; we look for it elsewhere and only run to Christ as our last resort.

Witness. When the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our life, for better or worse, we represent Him. He writes in John 15:26-27, *"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."*

When the Spirit takes up residence in our life, like moving into a new house, it begins to take on His smell, His feel, and His personality. A transformation begins to happen, and our life should begin looking like His home in the way we live, work, play, and treat others.

Empowerment. Notice that our witness is not based on our authority but on the authority of God. 15:26 says that the *"Spirit bears witness to the world about Jesus."* That means we don't have to "sell" Jesus to the world. He doesn't need us to do that. He can sell Himself. Rather, we allow Him to do His work, and we are faithful to make the introduction and to curate a

relationship with Him. We are not the source, simply the messengers and agents used to facilitate the work God is doing in the hearts of people around us.

That means we leave all the hard work up to Him. In John 16:8, Jesus tells the disciples, *“And when the Spirit comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”* That is His role; we don’t have to think our job is to convict and judge the world; that is His job. Our job is to show others how they can find the way back to God, the truth about God, and the life in God. We are simply people who live our lives to help others find their way home to God, where they can find the peace and rest their soul is longing for.

Home is not far off; it is closer than we may think. Because Jesus has come to take up residence in us, peace and rest are not things we have to go find, earn, or buy, for they have come to us.