

The Way Home

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[0 : 00] Friends, I probably don't have to tell you that these days we live in anxious times. For me, anxiety rears its head most often and in a most ugly way at about 3 a.m.

Does that happen to any of you? You go to sleep, no problem going to sleep, but 3 a.m. rolls around and you're awake. And all of the fears that you normally carry around are disproportionately large at 3 a.m.

They feel utterly unsolvable. Anxiety is actually on the rise statistically. There was a study done last year that focused primarily on Gen Z and millennial respondents.

And they found that an overwhelming 62% of people in Gen Z or millennial generations report feeling constant anxiety. In other words, it just never goes away, all day, every day.

And they ask what are the things that people typically worry about? And some of the answers are fairly common, things we would probably identify with. Financial concerns are always among the top.

[1 : 03] Family, like the well-being of your family, your kids, how your kids are doing. People worry about health, illness. A lot of worry about the political unrest and upheaval, about global conflict, about climate change.

I don't know if this is right. You're like, I'm feeling worse with every minute that goes by. You know, one parent, I thought some of us might resonate with this. One parent responded to this survey very honestly.

They said, honestly, I worry that there won't be a world for my child to grow up in. I thought we could probably identify with that. In John chapter 14, which we just heard read by Hillary, Jesus' disciples are feeling tremendous fear and anxiety.

If you know where the story is, Judas has just gone out to betray Jesus. They find out that one of their very own has been plotting to betray Jesus. Peter has just been told in front of everybody that he's going to deny Jesus.

And now Jesus has announced that he's going to go away, and where he is going, they cannot now come. And so, if you're in the mindset of these disciples, their whole world is coming apart.

[2 : 12] The future that they imagined is crumbling right before their eyes, and their hearts, as it says, are deeply troubled. Sure, we can identify with that, the sense that nothing is okay.

It's a kind of existential dread. And what we're going to see this morning is that this entire passage is Jesus' response to those troubled hearts.

It's a passage of comfort. So, Jesus comforts them, and through them us. But not in the way that we might expect. Not by placating them. Not by offering platitudes such as, oh, I'm sure it's going to work out.

You know, all this will pass, right? Right? Even platitudes like, oh, well, I'm sure it's all going to turn out in the end. No, Jesus comforts them by showing them something.

He actually shows us in this passage how to be at home in a world that is not our home. Is it possible to be at home, to make ourselves at home in a world that is not our home?

[3 : 17] That's what this is about. So, let's pray, and then we're going to open God's Word. If you have a Bible, we're looking at John chapter 14. If not, you can simply follow along. Lord, we ask you now that as we open your Word, that your Word would open us.

As we read your Word, that your Word would read us. And that through the power of the Holy Spirit, who is here now, living and active, present with us in this moment, searching our hearts, interceding for us, and the power of the Holy Spirit, that as we open your written Word, we would come face to face with the living Word, Jesus Christ.

It's in His name that we pray. Amen. So, the first thing that we see as we begin to understand Jesus' response is that He challenges us.

He shows us that in order to be at home in a world that's not our home, we need to name the ache. We need to name the ache. Why does Jesus respond to His disciples' troubled hearts by beginning to tell them about His Father's house?

It first seems like a disconnect. So, let's think about this. There are a lot of fears that we can name. I just named a few. Surely, you can name more. So, we can name things that we're afraid of, like we fear failure, we fear rejection, we fear suffering and loss and death.

[4 : 41] I'm sure we can think of lots of other things. Those are things that I know I'm afraid of those things. But see if you resonate with this. Beneath all of the fears that we can name, there seems to be a kind of deeper restlessness that we can't really explain.

You can't point to the thing and say, this is where this feeling is coming from. It's the sense that even when life is going well, we don't feel fully secure.

You know, we're kind of always looking over our shoulder, when's the next thing going to happen, you know? Even when we're surrounded by good things, we're not fully satisfied.

I was recently talking to some people who used to live in D.C. They moved away from D.C. And I was just talking to them recently about that whole process. And basically, they were living in D.C. And they kind of felt, after a number of years, they still felt displaced. And they still felt rootless. And they still felt unsettled. They never really felt like D.C. was their home.

[5 : 42] And so, they talked about it. And they said, well, maybe if we move back to the hometown where one of them had grown up, maybe then we'll feel that sense of rootedness. And so, they decided that's what they were going to do.

So, they packed everything up, and they moved home. And then more time passed. And they said, you know, there were a lot of good things about being at home. It was great to be in a place that was familiar. There were familiar places. It brought back a lot of old, good memories.

They had family connections there. And all of that was great. But then, after a number of years more, they kind of realized that wasn't the answer. And they still felt that sense of restlessness. And the reason is because there's a kind of homesickness that we carry with us wherever we go, even when we're home. Because the deepest homesickness in the human heart is not geographical.

It's spiritual. And listen, many of our greatest philosophers, ancient and modern, have kind of tuned into this and written about it and pontificated about it and wondered about it.

[6 : 46] So, Plato, centuries ago, observed that earthly desires seem to awaken in human beings a longing for something more, a longing for something eternal.

Why, when I see something beautiful, do I ache? Why does it point me towards something beyond it, some eternal form of beauty? Blaise Pascal talked about the infinite abyss in the human heart. Martin Heidegger described anxiety as a kind of not being at home in the world. That strange feeling that the world is at the same time familiar and yet also alien, that there's an alien quality to it, that it's familiar, but it doesn't quite fit.

It's not our true home. The philosopher Charles Taylor says, and this kind of thing is something that everybody experiences, not just religious people, but even committed, ardent agnostics and atheists.

He says, even non-religious people are haunted by the longing for something more, something transcendent. You know, now in our culture, last few years, a lot has happened in technology and particularly in the realm of AI, as we all know.

[7 : 59] And what's fascinating is to see that more and more people, and this has nothing to do with whether you're religious or non-religiously inclined person, more and more people are turning to AI, not simply for convenience or meal planning or managing email, but for companionship, for intimacy, for counsel and guidance, even for spiritual guidance.

I think roughly half of younger generations say they would trust AI as much as any human being to offer spiritual counsel. And I think that there's an interesting question that this poses, like, what are people looking for?

Why such a massive shift? And I think it's telling us the same thing, that there's something in us that longs to connect to something or someone beyond us, a longing to connect to something ultimate.

And I think for a lot of people these days, AI kind of is the closest thing they can imagine to that ultimate thing, that ultimate source of knowledge and wisdom. It's actually quite dangerous. There's a reason why we have this longing. C.S. Lewis writes, if we find in ourselves a desire nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.

[9 : 18] That, my friends, is the ache that Jesus is speaking to. This is the reason he responds to his disciples' troubled hearts by telling them about his father's house.

He's saying our troubled hearts are not merely emotional problems that need to be managed. They are signs. When we feel that kind of existential unrest, that's a sign that is pointing us to the fact that this world as it is, is not our home.

You know, some of you may remember the movie *The Terminal*. It's a Tom Hanks movie. It's a wonderful movie. It's actually based on a true story. But in *The Terminal*, Tom Hanks plays a man named Victor who gets trapped at the JFK airport.

He essentially flies in, and there's a political crisis in his home country, and it happens when he's in the airport, and so he can't actually leave the airport to enter the U.S., and he can't return home. And so he gets stuck in this kind of political bureaucratic limbo, and he has to live in *The Terminal* for years. It's a great film if you're looking for like a family movie night film.

[10 : 26] This is a good one. But he has to live there for years because there's nowhere else for him to go. And what's interesting about an airport terminal is that an airport terminal has almost everything you need to survive.

That's the key. That's what makes the movie work. He has food. He figures out a place to live where he can sleep, a kind of home that he makes for himself there.

He finds very meaningful work that uses his gifts and skills in really cool and creative ways. He develops a wide community of friends. He even gets a little romance thrown in.

So he makes, I won't spoil it for you, you know, but he makes a life for himself there. But all that time, he never stops trying to get home. Now, why would that be?

Because a terminal is not a home, right? That's why the movie is funny and absurd and why there's tension and why you want to watch it is because a terminal is by design not a home. By design, a terminal is a place of transit.

[11 : 28] You pass through a terminal on your way home. You pass through it. You don't live there. So when we have troubled, anxious hearts, the first thing that we can do is to simply recognize where we are.

This is the terminal, right? This world, this life as it is, is the terminal. This world is not our home. And even though we can make a life for ourselves and we can find work and a place to live and friends and it all feels very close to home, it's never going to be home.

There's always going to be that sense that we're missing something. So you can hopefully find meaningful work that pays you enough to live and to get your needs met, but you're never going to find a job that fully satisfies your need for meaning and identity.

Friends, a lot of people move to D.C. looking for that very thing. Looking for that very thing. If I don't have it here, I'm going to have it when I move to here or when I move up to here. I want to make this lateral move over to here.

And then finally, I will be able to network my way into a job that actually gives me a me. You're never going to find it because this is a terminal, right?

[12 : 43] When you start trying to get your identity from your work, your anxiety is going to skyrocket. Okay? Because what happens? If you need your work to give you identity and meaning and justify your existence, you're going to be terrified of failure.

You're going to work all the time. Some of us work seven days a week. We work 100-hour weeks. We're always going. We don't have time for friends. We don't have time for family, for kids, because we're always going. If you're deriving meaning and identity from your work, you're not going to be able to take constructive criticism very well because it's all going to feel very personal.

They're attacking you and your worth, right? You can, in the terminal, you can hopefully find stable relationships and friends and, God willing, maybe have a family, but you're never going to get all of your needs met through those relationships.

When you try to get all of your needs met through your relationships, through your friends, through your spouse, through your kids, anxiety is going to skyrocket, right?

You're going to end up being, and we see this a lot of times in ourselves, right? You're going to end up being overly controlling. You're going to be overly critical of those people. Why? Because they're not giving you what you need.

[13:58] You may end up crushing the people you most love under the weight of your expectations because this is the terminal. So, a troubled heart is like a spiritual alarm.

When our anxiety is going up over these things, that's like a spiritual alarm, and we need to listen to that because it's a sign that in some area of my life, whatever I'm anxious about at 3 a.m., chances are if I follow the thread of that anxiety down, there is something that I'm looking to give me what only God can give me.

There's some way where I'm trying to turn the terminal into home. I'm trying to turn the terminal, this world, into my own personal heaven. And whenever you do that, your anxiety and your fear is going to skyrocket because everything hinges on this being perfect, right?

So, this is the first thing. Troubled hearts, fear, anxiety. We have to be honest and we have to be able to name the ache, right?

Then, as we follow Jesus into his response, we see that not only is he sort of naming the ache, friends, the reason you have troubled hearts is because you're longing for your father's house.

[15:13] But then he goes on to talk about that, and in verse 2 he says, essentially, don't worry. In my father's house, there are many rooms. What's he saying?

It's an amazing response. This is the terminal. Yeah, and it's going to be hard here. It's never going to be perfect. But guess what? You do have a home. There is a place out there where you're going to find complete security, where you're going to find complete belonging, where your needs are going to be fully satisfied, where you can finally rest, right?

It's going to be a place where you can be fully known and fully loved. All the things you're looking for in the terminal, they're in my father's house. And he's saying, he goes on to say, you know, if this were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

He says, I'm not just leaving. I'm just going on vacation. I have a mission. The whole reason I'm leaving is to prepare a place for you. Now, this is a very famous passage.

A lot of times, I remember growing up, I used to read this passage. I go to prepare a place for you in a room in my father's house. And first of all, if you've ever read the King James, with all due respect, this is one of the places where the King James just totally whips it.

[16:21] It uses the word mansions, which is just a bad image. But some of us grew up singing songs about God's going to build me a giant mansion, you know, like a big heavenly McMansion in the suburbs of heaven.

And this is not at all, you know, with all due respect to King James, they just whiff it. The word is room. And what this is really telling us here, you know, we sort of imagine Jesus leaving and doing some kind of like interior design work.

Like, it's like when the hotel says, like, your room's ready, but it's not, you can't give you the key yet. You know, they still have to clean it. And then, and check-ins at three. And so, come back at three, and then you can have the key card, and we'll store your luggage, right?

So, that's not what Jesus is saying. Here's what Jesus is saying. The reason that you can't find your way home, the reason that we can't find our way home is not because we don't know the way.

He actually says, we'll come back to this, He says, you do know the way. The reason is because the way home is blocked. It's blocked. It's blocked by sin.

[17:29] It's blocked by the power that deceives and enslaves humanity. It's blocked by death. So, we don't need a map.

We need something that can break through those barriers, right? What Jesus is saying is you can't find your own way home. You cannot think your way to God. You can't reason your way to God. There's no book out there that you can read apart from Scripture that's going to kind of unlock the way home for you, right? You can't find some guru out there who's going to finally spill the beans on how to find God.

You're not going to find it. You can't meditate your way to God. There's no way you can pass that barrier. So, when Jesus says that He goes to prepare a place for us, He says that He's going to open the way back home by defeating the powers that keep us from home.

That's what He's saying. So, when He says, I go to prepare a place, He's talking about the victory that He is about to achieve on behalf of all humanity, right?

[18 : 34] That's why He says in verse 6, I am the way and the truth and the life. It's why He goes on to say, no one comes to the Father except through me.

He's not saying through my teachings. He's not saying through the example I set, through me, through my very flesh, right?

So, He says, I am the way and the reason He says that is because He's the one who opens to us the way back to the Father's house. How? How? Through His life, through His death, through His resurrection.

So, Jesus, as I said, is not merely a guide handing us a map. We have plenty of those in the world, on every street corner, on every Instagram feed. Jesus is the victorious rescuer who breaks through every enemy that keeps us from home.

And when He goes on to say, I am the truth, He's not just saying, I have interesting truth for you to contemplate. He says, I am the only one who can expose the lies that keep us enslaved.

[19 : 42] See, in John's gospel, if you read this in context, John's gospel connects evil to deception, right? So, the devil in John's gospel, in John 8, is called a liar and the father of lies.

So, Jesus is saying, I'm the only one who can counteract those lies. What lies? Well, lies meant to separate us from God and from one another.

The lie that God is not good. The lie that living for ourselves instead of God will lead to freedom and happiness. The lie that deep down, you are not worth loving.

And if anybody knew the truth about you, they would flee. The lie that we can save ourselves. The lie that it's not really a big deal.

We can figure it out, right? We could go on and on and on and on and on. But all these lies are designed to do the same thing, right? If the entire purpose of our existence is to love God and love our neighbors, ourselves, what we just heard in the liturgy, the lies are meant to counteract those things.

[20 : 52] To love myself, to reject God, and to, if necessary, exploit my neighbor for my own gain. And that's the reality of the world that we live in, right? Jesus is the only one who can shatter those lies because Jesus, in every breath he takes, shows us the very face of God.

He says, if you know me, you know God. If you know my character and what I'm like and how I respond to sinners and how I respond to outcasts and how I respond to the needy and how I respond to all of the brokenness of this world, that is the heart of God on display.

So he says, if you see in me the truth of God, what do you see? God is good. God made us for himself. Our lives are never going to make sense unless we know that.

And in Christ, we see that God loves us so much that he's willing to lay down his life to set us free and to bring us home. He says, I am the truth. And then he goes on to say, I'm the life.

Jesus is the life because he enters death and destroys it from within. In John's gospel, Jesus repeatedly identifies himself with life.

[22 : 02] I came that they may have life and have it abundantly, abundantly, right? I am the resurrection and the life, right?

Because I live, you also will live, right? Jesus is the life because death couldn't hold him. Jesus is the only one who enters the grave as a victim and comes out as a victor.

And this is what sets Jesus apart from every other religious leader in history. With all due respect, every other religious leader and philosopher, all these religions and philosophies were started by someone who is pointing the way to God, right?

Do this thing, follow these teachings, adopt these practices or principles or prove your devotion in this or that way, right? They all have that in common. Only Jesus says, I am the way. He's saying, I've opened the way to God.

By knowing me, you know him. And so, therefore, as he says, no one comes to the Father except through Jesus. Not because God is stingy or choosy with his mercy, but because Christ is the only one who can open the way home.

[23 : 12] Now, friends, that is very important. Because when Jesus says, no one comes to the Father except through me, modern people hear in that arrogance and exclusion and intolerance.

How can anybody claim to know the only way to God? And that feels so exclusionary. But notice what Jesus is not saying. Jesus is not saying only the best people get to come to God, right?

Now, that's, again, with all due respect, that's what most other religions are saying in one way or another. And they all define best differently. But at the end of the day, most other religions are

saying only the best people get to come to God, right?

So, depending on how you define that, that can actually be pretty exclusionary, pretty intolerant. Jesus is saying something different. He's saying no one can defeat sin and death and evil except me.

And yet he's saying, but I've done that on behalf of everybody. So, that actually makes Christianity at the same time radically exclusive, but also radically inclusive.

[24 : 18] It's, I would say, the most inclusive faith in the world. Because if the way open to God, if the way to God, the way to the Father's house was based on moral performance, friends, most of us wouldn't make it.

Let's just be honest. There wouldn't be a lot of hope for me. I'll speak for myself. I'd be on the outside looking in. If it were based on intelligence, many of us would be excluded.

If it were based on religious achievement, devotion, many of us would be excluded, right?

We've got full-time jobs and kids and bills to pay. We don't have time to crawl on our knees as pilgrims up flights of stairs, right? Or flagellate ourselves or meditate for hours on end, right?

We wouldn't make it. But if Jesus is the way, if by simply knowing and believing in Him, we can come into direct relationship with God, what that means, friends, is that anyone can come, right?

[25 : 28] Those who are ashamed, those who have been rejected, those who are right now in the throes of addiction, those who have been utterly forgotten, those who would never be accepted in other religious communities or traditions.

Christianity is exclusive in its Savior, but because of that, it is radically inclusive in its invitation.

Anyone can come.

Christ alone has opened the way, and He opens it for all. So this question that we're wrestling with, how can we be at home in a world that is not our home? Listen, let me just tell you this directly.

God does not want you to live in fear. God does not want you to live in the throes of anxiety. And I believe, and I've seen this happen, I believe that God can set us free.

It may even be that some of you are here this morning, and God can and will set you free from fear that is right now gripping you. God does not want you to live in constant fear and anxiety.

[26 : 31] So the next time that begins to rise up in you, instead of simply trying to tamp it down or minimize it or numb yourself or distract yourself from it, listen to it.

Let it point you to the truth. Let it point you to the fact. Be willing to name the ache. Right? This is, oh, I forgot, but now I remember.

This is not my home. This is the terminal. I'm passing through this life in this world on the way to my home. And the more we accept that, then actually, paradoxically, it doesn't pull us out of the world.

It means that we can actually engage and live in the world, and we can receive all of the good gifts of the world without demanding that they save us. You know, so you can enjoy your work without expecting it to give you meaning and identity, because this is the terminal.

You can love your family without setting the full weight of your soul on them. This is the terminal.

You can engage the world without needing it to fully satisfy you, because this is the terminal.

[27 : 33] And then instead of putting your hope in the terminal, put your hope on your true home. Rest in the promise that Christ gives us. Here's the promise. Jesus has made a way for us to come home to our Father.

He is the way home. And friends, this is not some future reality where you say, well, I'm glad that's taken care of. Check it off the list. Now I just got to make it from A to B. By living lives connected to Jesus, how?

Through prayer, through Scripture, by coming together with your brothers and sisters and worshipping, by coming around and receiving Christ at this table, by living lives connected to Jesus, we can actually experience the rest and the security of home here and now.

One of the ways we might think of it is like one of the journeys we're on as Christian pilgrims in the terminal is learning how to be at home in a world that is not our home. In other words, it's moving from being homesick to being home secure, right?

Because I'm secure in that home, I'm not going to struggle with homesickness here because I know where I'm going, right? So you can move to being home secure. And it's interesting, we don't have time to dive into this, but at the very end of this passage, do you know how you can tell when a Christian is living out of that security?

[28 : 52] When you encounter a Christian who's, they're connected to Jesus, right? They're praying, they're worshiping, right? They're connected in and they know that and they're home secure. The way you can tell is that they pray the most audacious prayers.

They pray the most insane-sounding prayers. They expect massive things from God. And that's essentially what Jesus says at the end of His passage.

He says, Christians who believe in Me, who are resting in this promise of home, these are the Christians who are able to ask God to do not just great works, but greater works even than what happened when Jesus was in His earthly ministry, right?

There's a lot of audacity in that. But then he goes on with him crazier, he says, and God will do those things, right? Those are the kinds of things God wants to do through His people, but not if we are living in bondage to fear, right?

So I want you to imagine if God were to set you free right now, right? If at some point somebody prays for you or you come up and you receive the Eucharist or in some way and you feel that unburdening of your soul, you begin to feel that fear lift, what prayers would you then pray?

[29 : 59] What risks would you then take? What might God do through you, through this community? Let's pray. Lord, thank You.

You don't want us to be captive to fear. You've made a way home. You're calling Your people home. Lord, we pray that even as we gather around these truths and sing them and pray them into our hearts, even as we gather around Your table, Lord, that the truths that are now primarily conceptual would become flesh and blood reality in us, that we would be actually experientially and palpably different, that we would leave here unburdened, Lord, that we would leave here secure in the home that You have prepared for us, and that we would be known and marked by that, Lord, by our fearlessness.

Lord, we pray all of this for Your glory in Your Son's name. Amen. Amen. Amen.