

# God is With Us: The Way Home

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Genesis 35: 23-27 The sons of Leah: Reuben the firstborn of Jacob, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. The sons of

Rachel's maidservant Bilhah: Dan and Naphtali. The sons of Leah's

maidservant Zilpah: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob, who

were born to him in Paddan Aram. Jacob came home to his father Isaac in

Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed.

Our focus verse is Genesis 35:27. Jacob came *home* to his father Isaac in

Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed.

**Home.** That is a word that can be filled with a litany of thoughts, emotions, issues, memories. In the text today, Jacob and his brother Esau, have come home to bury their father Isaac.

Jacob has lived a long life, an interesting life, a God filled life, a life filled with questions, drama, problems, life and death. Yet still a life focused on the Lord God. What does home mean to you? For many people, home is a childhood memory maybe of Thanksgiving Day feasts, or Christmas

Greeting card cover depicted in the Currier and Day Ives prints. Snow covered landscape, warm light cast on the snow, smoke curling from the chimney, everything all wonderful, peaceful, and merry. Home is where you spend the rainy afternoon reading a book, or playing a board game with a friend or sibling. For many people, home evokes the emotion of safety, security, acceptedness.

But for others, home is or was a living nightmare. Reality says that it could be a home filled with anger or shouting, a home that lacks the warm fellowship of love. Home could be a place to sleep, or get a meal, but a place to stay away from, and to get away from ASAP.

At Thanksgiving, perhaps more than during any other holiday, our thoughts turn toward **home**. More people travel during that four-day weekend than during any other time of the year - and the destination for the majority of people is ... **home**. Our homing instincts seem to come alive at this celebration of Thanksgiving - but each year, it seems there is more to remind us of just how fragile homes are becoming today.

Every Thanksgiving, the numbers of people who find soup kitchens, food banks and mission shelters the only "homes" they have grow. It is beginning to sound more like McDonald's:--- "Millions served."

During the middle of a worship service at FUMC in Moran, Texas two years ago, the door opened and a couple of what I might call “Road Warriors” showed up. They plopped down tiredly in the back seats of the church. The congregation stirred a bit, made uncomfortable by the interruption, and uncomfortable because they didn’t know these folks.

Worship ended, and even after I had invited the members to stay and visit with our guests, some people skedaddled out the door choosing to not greet our visitors. But... others, yes, others invited the couple to have coffee and donuts, asked questions about where they were from, etc. One man called me aside and said, “Preacher, remember several months ago, you said, “we should see the face of Jesus in all? Even in the faces of these weary folks, THAT could be Jesus himself.” Yes. He understood.

The couple lived in their raggedy car. And God’s grace reigned that day in FUMC Moran Texas. Several people met the needs of these homeless people. They worked to find them a spot to stay, a travel trailer as it turned out. Got them meals lined up for a bit until they could get on their feet. The couple found work, mostly odd jobs around the community for about a year, and then, moved on. No notice, no forwarding address, no good byes. But we rejoiced that we had been faithful to Jesus Christ. Faithful in this one small part of God’s kingdom.

The point for us is God puts himself in my path, in your path, in our paths **every day**. Not **just** in the personage of the homeless who live among us. But also in the midst of families that look good on the outside, but who are hurting, pain filled and broken on the inside. Some families are like those Christmas candies that come in the box. Look great on the outside, but have a scary inside.

Where your spiritual home is and what does scripture tell us about home? There are over 200 references to “home” in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Our key text today Genesis 35: 27 .Jacob came *home* to his father Isaac in Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed.

Some of the “home” texts are **orders**, 1 Kings 12:24-“Go home every one of you.”

Some are **Narrative**, Gen 31:55”Then he left and returned home.”

Acts of  **blessing**, “Proverbs 3:33. But he blesses the home of the righteous.’

In the New Testament our Lord Jesus gives an **order** to the one healed in Mark 2:11, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”

Home is also **hospitality**. Acts 10:32, “He is a guest at the home of Simon the tanner.”

But more importantly, Christ says that his home will be with us as a residence for the triune God to live in us. (NRSV) John 14:23, - “Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.” Jesus Christ has just told you that if you love Jesus and obey His teachings, that Christ’s Father, Almighty God will come and live into your heart and soul and mind. God will live with you, Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit as well. “We will come to them and make our home with them.”

Jesus is specific in his statement to us. In John 14:15 Jesus says to his disciples, that is us, in the NRSV it says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Does anyone here NOT understand what Jesus said?

Jesus is promising his followers that the Holy Spirit will abide with them, and that God and Christ will abide with them as well.

In Luke 10:25-27, Jesus is asked what a person must do to gain/inherit eternal life and Jesus queries back. “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” The man answers Jesus by quoting the Shema, a prayer from the OT book of Deuteronomy 6:4-5. , “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your

soul and with all your strength.” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus tells us that if we obey his commandments, ***Love God, love neighbor***, he will abide in us with God as their home.

Could anything be more wonderful than that? That the Holy Trinity would abide with and in you? My friend Clark Williams gave me a book to read last week entitled, *I Saw Jesus This Morning*. One of the chapters is entitled “I See Jesus in You.” I love that phrase. *I see Jesus in you*. In you, and you, and you, and you. Turn to your neighbor and say this, “I see Jesus in you.” Say it again, “I see Jesus in you.”

For me, for each of us I suspect, our daily challenge is to make our own life a model of Jesus’ life, to keep his commandments and to love God and to Love neighbor. When that happens, guess what? There is a new tenant in your spirit, and mind, and soul and self. God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit make you their home. The creator lives in the created.

Here is a challenge for us. Do you want Christ and the father to live in you with the Spirit, to make you their home? If you do, then you must obey Christ’s commandments. What are they? **Love God, love neighbor.**

If we fail to do both, love God, love neighbor, we risk the loss of Christ making his home with us. Loving neighbor takes many forms, right? You love your next door neighbor when they mow and trim the yard, keep the weeds in the yard down. You love your neighbor at work who is courteous and kind. You love the neighbor who lets you turn in front of them with a friendly wave. But what of the neighbors that are the unseen? The poor among us in Lubbock. Or perhaps that neighbor who is a mean spirited person, or the broken person? What of my neighbor that lives in squalor in Paraguay or Borneo? They are still my neighbors. Christ said so. To finish the discourse from Luke 10: 28-37 about loving God and loving neighbor, Jesus told the man who asked him, ‘who was his neighbor?’, the rest of the story. **The Good Samaritan story**. “But he (the man questioning Jesus) wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "**And who is my neighbor?**" And Jesus tells the story of the traveler beaten and robbed and a religious leader passes the man by. Can't be bothered. Another well respected person on the way to temple passes by, can't get dirty. Yet a man who was considered repulsive to any good faithful Jew helps the one who actually despised him and his low status. You see, we are all in this life together, and Jesus **commands** us to love God, and **Love neighbor**. Jesus doesn't ask, Jesus does not beg, he **commands**.

We close with a challenge about finding the way home today. Hopefully, God is calling you to examine where you each can be in ministry you're your neighbor. Locally, in the city, in the state, in the country, or in the international community. God has commanded it. Love God, love neighbor. What area of ministry is God calling you to examine, to check out, to explore? Is it ministry with children or adults? Is it teaching youth ministry, a greeter ministry, helping with homeless ministry, building a home ministry, nursing home or school ministry? is it a ministry of being with the sick, the shut in, the poor, the different one?

**There is an expectation by God, by the Christ,** that we will all be in some form of faithful, lovingly obedient ministry to God, to neighbor. It is non negotiable. Christ said it.

Today, if you are wondering how to get home, I invite you to come to the altar for prayer. If you have never committed your life to Christ, I invite you to come forward and pray. Today, Christ has called, commanded each one of us into ministry with Him. Love God, love neighbor, John 14:23, says, "Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our **home** with him. "

Let the Father, the Christ, and the Spirit make their home in you. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Would you bow your heads as we consecrate these elements and ourselves to the Lord?