

Pentecost 8 – July 19, 2016
Text: Ephesians 2:11-22
Theme: Welcome Home

If you have ever been foster parents or if you have ever been a foster child, you know that there are some intricacies in that reality that are not understood by the outside world. Foster children have a very difficult time feeling comfortable in their lives. They feel as though if they like the foster home too much, they are abandoning their birth parents. On the other hand, if they focus too much on their birth parents, they feel as though they are not moving on with their lives. They are stuck in the now, neither being able to appreciate the past nor anticipate the future. This just scratches the surface of what is a highly complex and hugely difficult emotional problem. I suppose that only a foster child truly knows what it feels like to be a foster child and only a foster parent truly knows what it feels like to be a foster parent. However, having said that, I think we can all imagine what it feels like to be excluded, to not fit in, to live in an unstable, unrooted life. We like to know what we are going to be doing tomorrow, where we will be eating and where we will be sleeping. No one enjoys living life in a state of flux.

That is how Jeremiah saw his people and that is how Jesus saw the people in the Gospel for today. People were running to and fro not able yet to enter their new adoptive home in heaven and yet

neither really at home in this world. Harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Things have not changed much for us. We are still living our lives in a state of flux. We can't get to where we belong until we die, we have no control over when that happens and we don't fit in where we are. So we have to be where we have to be for now and we don't know how long the "now" will last. We are a lot like foster children. We know where we belong but we cannot get there on our own. We just have to wait. Every foster child knows that at one time, he belonged to his biological parents. He knows innately that it was the biological parent's responsibility to care for him. No matter how hard people try to explain to him all of the logical reasons why his biological parents are not with him, caring for him, watching over him, he probably feels lost and left behind, abandoned.

We belong to God. We know innately that we need to be with God as our first parents were in the Garden of Eden. He has promised that he has a place prepared for us but for now we must live here in this alien land. Nothing here is as it should be and we are sometimes heartsick as we live our lives here wanting to be there, waiting to be there. We hear all of the logical explanations of why we are here and he is there and logically we can agree that the brokenness in which we live is a consequence of our sin and when

the time is right, God will bring us home. Our minds get it. But telling our hearts is a harder matter. Getting our heart to fully grasp the promise of salvation and ignore Satan's constant taunting that he will never come for us...that is a difficult matter...that is an impossible proposition.

But St. Paul gives us hope. We have no fear that Satan will have his way and we will spend eternity in this place of pain and tears. The legal battle has already taken place and we have been purchased. We have been formally adopted by the Father in heaven and our brother Jesus Christ is on his way to take us home. We sold our souls to Satan for the price of a piece of fruit, but Jesus Christ paid the price of that sin by suffering Hell and we are now eternal citizens of Heaven. Everything is prepared and now we only await transport. Like foster children, we live in the not yet.

Sometimes we intentionally disrupt our lives with sin because even though we know that the life Christ has prepared for us is far better than this life, we are insecure and we long for what we can know, what we can touch and taste and smell. Sin is what we know. We know the sour, sickly smell of sin and as putrid as it is, it is also that comfortable to us. Heaven, perfection, holiness, paradise? These things we often fear because we fear what we do not know. We live in between and that is unsettling but Paul promises us that

we are headed for a much better home where our Father awaits us with open arms.

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.”

That is who we are, not abandoned, forgotten children, but saints, members of the household of God. He gives us his Word and his very body and blood to empower us to remember who we are and whose we are. He is coming for us and the day will come when we walk across the threshold of heaven and see Jesus and hear him say to us, “Welcome home.”