

## There's No Place Like Home

Dr. Patricia L. Hunter

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What a powerful message of belonging and finding home. There, is no greater love than this--where you go, I will go. Where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God, my God. Those words will always be sacred to me, for those are the words I used over 10 years ago to propose to my beloved Dr. Renee McCoy. And she said yes! (Renee will be in worship tomorrow.)

Please join me in reading together our scripture, John 14:1-3; 23

Jesus said: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Abba's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am there you may be also...Those who love me will keep my word, and my Abba will love them and make our home with them.

The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Jesus was telling an anxious group of followers, do not let your hearts be troubled. In other words, don't worry. He said, you already believe in God so believe in me too. Jesus was warning his disciples that his physical presence on earth was coming to an end. Soon he would no longer be with them. Jesus wanted to reassure his people that although it may feel like the world around you is falling apart, don't give up. Hold on, God has not abandoned you! Seems like words we need to hear and hold close to our hearts today.

Jesus also mentioned a house with many rooms. He was not talking about a McMansion or a housing boom with condos on every corner, accompanied by sky high mortgages and ever-increasing rents. Jesus was talking metaphorically about the Holy One being in relationship with believers. Jesus promised his followers that they would not be left alone. God will take up residence in them—in each one of them.

And, where God resides, there are many rooms, not just one room where we all have to cram in to fit. There is space for everyone. We don't have to be alike, think alike, vote alike, look alike, love alike, because there is room for us all—those who believe like us and others who believe differently.

But what is most exciting for me about this text, is that not only will the Holy One **be** with each of us, God will find a home **in** each of us. Home. Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz said there is no place like home. As one who travels 50% on her job, I agree there is no place like home. The word home brings to mind safety, belonging, peace, purpose, and unconditional love. When God comes into our lives and makes God's home in us there will be a divine intimacy within like none other.

Ntozake Shange's famous choreopoem entitled; For Colored Girl Who Considered Suicide/ When the Rainbow is Enuf, is a series of monologues depicting the challenges, blessings, and horrors of being a black girl and a black woman in America. This choreopoem ends with the song,

I found God in myself,  
I found God in myself,  
And, I loved her fiercely,  
I loved her fiercely,  
I found God in myself.

No need to look for belonging and purpose through addictive behaviors like compulsive shopping, binge eating, or even social media. If we want to find home, if we want to find love, ... forgiveness, safety and purpose, we only need to look within and find God there.

The search for spiritual wholeness is real and so is the search for a spiritual community. When the God in you encounters the God in me and we work together at a team, there is a power present that is hard to deny. SFBC has been a place of love, belonging, and purpose, for so many for over 150 years. Churches come and churches go. Yet to survive for 150 years takes works, commitment, and a fair amount of grace that we offer to one another.

At SFBC it is important for us to celebrate homecoming each year. No matter the systemic evils and challenges we experience out in the world or the internal doubts, transgressions, and fears we inwardly harbor, we can come home to SFBC again, and again, and again. Here we find God in rainbow shades of hopes and dreams.

So, welcome home my sisters and brother to this community of faith who will support you on life's journey and encourage you to be the person God is calling you to be. And, welcome home to that still small voice within who loves you passionately and fiercely. Dorothy was right, there's no place like home.

Amen.