

Sermon preached by Pastor Ben Kuerth on John 14:1-6 on May 14th, 2017 at Victory of the Lamb.

Series: Empty
Today's Focus: Empty Home

“There Is a Place Filled With a Perfect Peace (and it's for you!)”

“My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him” (Psalm 62:1).

This week Facebook memories shared a picture with me that I had posted 3 years ago. It was a picture of me when I was a little boy with my Grandpa Nottling on his motorcycle—Grandpa who is now with the Lord in heaven. Incredibly he died just days after his wife of 60+ years, my Grandma, preceded him into glory. The doctor said he simply died of a broken heart. Due to various ailments they had been separated from each other to receive medical care in different places. The home they had shared together for over 40 plus years was empty.

They both would've loved to go back home so they could be together again, but God had a different plan. Actually, a far better plan. A plan to take them to their heavenly home. To the place that their Savior had prepared for them where all their troubles would be long gone. And today, friends, as we wrap up this series...what God wants to do is fill you up with this most comforting truth—that this place filled with a perfect peace...is also for you!

The last couple weeks we've talked about how feelings of emptiness take on many forms. There are feelings of emptiness when you experience the frustration of work or when you confuse what you do with who you are. There are feelings of emptiness when the experiences that you pursue don't ultimately fill you up. Or when you get them they fill you up in a fleeting way only to leave you feeling even emptier than before. And then there are those feelings of emptiness that are so deep down they seem to come from the infinitely deep cavern of our soul—feelings like those of an empty home.

When you've prepared a crib in the nursery and you've got some cute baby items all laid out...but tragically that crib remains empty. When you've stood beside the grave of a spouse and your bed at home suddenly seems much too large for one person. When family life has not turned out the way you dreamed or romantic hopes have left you not only feeling lonely but cynical. When separation feels like the theme song of your life. Can anyone fill these sort of deep, empty spaces in your soul? Today Jesus says, “I can. Because *I am*. I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

In John chapter 14 Jesus says, **Do not let your hearts be troubled**. Now for just a moment let's give into that cynical part of our hearts. You know what part I'm talking about, don't you? That part of you that hears Jesus say, “Do not let your hearts be troubled” and immediately thinks, “Well that's easy for you to say. What do you know about trouble anyway, mister?” Because isn't that how you often think when you're struggling and some well-meaning person says, “Hey, keep your chin up, pal” or some other such pithy little piece of advice? So is that what this is? Is this just empty encouragement?

Not in the least! Do you know *when* Jesus says this? It's Maundy Thursday evening. This is the very night on which Jesus is going to be betrayed by his close friend Judas, the very night he is going to be arrested by armed soldiers, the very night before his brutal execution on a cross the next day. Jesus is in imminent danger of his own death...and he knows it. And how strange these words must have sounded also to Jesus' disciples, **Do not let your hearts be troubled**.

Because when Jesus says these words recorded in John 14 he has just finished announcing Judas's betrayal to them, told them he himself was soon going to die, and declared that Peter would deny even knowing him before the night is through. Betrayal, danger, deprivation and death...does Jesus know a thing or two about trouble? The Son of God sure does. So when he says, **Do not let your hearts be troubled** this isn't some naïve, pithy advice. It's the word of God supported with a beautiful promise that Jesus spoke to the same people he knew were going to desert him!

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

A pastor friend of mine shared that there was once a little old grandma lady in his church who was confused about these words because she had lived through the Great Depression. She said that in the depression era a "room" is what you had to find to rent after you had lost everything. A "room" in the depression era meant a shabby, squalid little place that you hoped would be temporary until your troubles all went away. Is that the kind of place Jesus is talking about?

No way, friends! This is no temporary room that Jesus is talking about. There is no shabby rental. The word in Greek refers to a permanent place. This is a permanent place where empty people will be filled with a perfect peace once for all! A place from which you will never be evicted. A place in which every desire will be fully met. And the best part...a place in the presence of Jesus your Savior—where there are no more disappointments, no more cancer diagnoses, no more loved ones dying and whether nothing can ever deprive you of contentment.

⁴You know the way to the place where I am going. ⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

In this sermon series the last couple weeks we've looked at how we all want something that this life cannot give us, don't we? And as much as we might want to fill the empty cavern of our souls with a contentment that we can find here on earth, we won't. Sin snakes its way into every aspect of life here under the sun, even into our homes. This is the reason why even the best mother often feels like they're not doing enough. Isn't that true? You look around at other people's lives or you see other people's lives on Facebook—their relationships, their families, their pictures, their parenting...and you think, "Their life looks so awesome. They're rockin' it! And then there's me. I feel so empty..."

But friends, remember, the truth is Jesus actually knows how you feel. He emptied himself in order to take on every aspect of our humanity—including our frailty. So he knows where you ache and where you hurt and feel empty...which means he also knows just how to fill you up! As the Son of God he came from heaven deployed on a mission to undo the disappointment that sin, our own human sin, has caused ever since Adam and Eve ruined Eden. Jesus came to ensure that everything would be accomplished so that he could make good on this promise: There is yet a place filled with a perfect peace...a place being prepared for you!

How do you get there? Simply...believe in him. *Trust* in Jesus. Put the foundation of your life on the reality of his empty tomb. Build your home there. Because his resurrection is proof that he has done it!

Everything that you and I could not do because of our sin, he has accomplished! Jesus is no mere mortal man who is destined to disappoint as is the tendency of mortal men like me. He's also completely and fully the Son of the living God. As pastors and people and things in this life come and go, as they change, Jesus is the one constant. He is the world's one and only Savior. He is the only way to this place that is filled with a perfect peace for he alone went to the cross where he was forsaken in our place, where he suffered our hell, so that with every sin of ours paid in full we could have a permanent place in his heaven!

Of course you and I...we're not in heaven yet, are we? Yet in the meantime there is a place where God promises to keep filling you up with his peace so that you don't have to go through life depleted but so you can overflow with love for others. It's called the church. We're a family of believers who gather here every week where Jesus gives us his peace through the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit who fills our empty hearts. We're not perfect but here Jesus gives us the assurance of his perfect love— forgiveness of sins announced by our pastors, grace poured onto our foreheads through the water and word of Holy Baptism, and peace tangibly placed into our hands and mouths in the sacrament of Holy Communion with that promise of Jesus ringing in our ears: "This...this is *for you*." And friends, you know what else is? Because of Jesus...a permanent place filled with a perfect peace where you will never feel empty again! Amen.