

Sermon Archive 240

Thursday 18 April, 2019

Knox Church, Christchurch

Lesson: John 14: 1-3, 15-20

Preacher: Rev. Dr Matthew Jack



Reflection: . . . until they rest in you

It is night, and the rain is falling. I can hear it on the roof - making a wee tinkling drum rattle of a sound. I actually like hearing the rain - it draws me to notice that here, at home, I'm warm and dry. It reminds me that under the roof lifted up above me, I find shelter.

It was about five years ago that first I came here. The property manager gave me the key, and with a bit of help from some hired student labourers, I brought all my things in here. The piano had to go against an inner wall. Grandfather clock must go where it can be seen. The dining room table goes in the obvious place - I put the pots and pans into the kitchen drawers. I put all my familiar things into position to make of this house a home. In this broad city, on this point along the timeline, I am given a space to be. When rain falls, I will be warm and dry. When unfriendliness comes, I will shut the door and pull the curtain. Here I will be safe - and sing a song of belonging. "You have made us for yourself, O Lord; and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

I'm told, dear God, that some people have no shelter. When the wind blows, the cold bites. When the rain falls, socks go damp. When unfriendliness knocks, there is no door to shut it out. I don't want to think about it - the restless, wandering heart. I don't want to think about it - the "out there" unsheltered one in the elements. I don't want to think about the ruptured home. Dispossession. Nowhere to stand, or cook, or sleep, or rise, or do any of the ordinary things.

Our hearts are restless until they rest in you. So, let me hear the rain on

the roof - my dwelling place. Amen.

-ooOoo-

It is night, and I'm thinking about this thing called faith. There are stories and songs, and poems and prayers - gathered into a black bound book and given to me for reading - and feeling, and wondering. Stories of a world made and held in love. Stories of apples eaten and expulsions made. Stories of covenants pledged and embraces extended. Stories of forgiveness forged as the mustard seed grew into a sheltering tree. Stories of the Spirit coming, and tears being wiped from the eyes of the weeping. Stories of "this is my body, given for you".

I dwell in this, dear God. This is my home. You have made me for yourself, and my heart is restless, until it rests in you - in this - in faith. In believing, in hoping, I find a home.

I'm told, dear God, that some people find no shelter. For them, it's no gift of faith. It's just doubt, and fear, and suspicion. There is no God here. There is no love. Just volcanos, earthquakes and all that's random. Just standing naked before the nothing. Wandering, adrift, doggy paddling towards meaning - sinking . . .

You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. So, let me hear the mystery of who you are, and who I am, and what to make of faith - and find within it all a dwelling place. Let rain fall upon the roof, while I find shelter. Amen.

-ooOoo-

It is night, and I'm making a fish pie. This is hardly a startling headline - a pie made of fish. A simple case of someone working in the kitchen as the rain falls on the roof outside. When first I was given a kitchen, I hardly knew what to do with it. It was a case of rice and frozen vegetables - nothing I dare would share with anyone else - lest my simple lack of culinary talent be exposed. But since then, a skill has been acquired - or should that be a gift has been given. Into the head and hands of a hungry man have been placed recipes, and experience,

and imagination and taste. This will be a really good fish pie, the likes of which could easily and proudly be shared. This will make its maker feel pleased, engaged with the creative and worthwhile. Once I've eaten the pie, I might play the piano and write a sermon. In what I do, I find a home.

Next door, in her shelter, one of God's other creatures will be writing an employment agreement document. It will be sound and helpful. Over the road, another of God's creatures will be painting a portrait - capturing the lines of a face, a look in the eyes. His work will be good. Over the fence, someone will tuck a child into bed, rain falling upon the roof. It will have been a day of patience, love, the giving of time, the watching of growth with delight and fear. In what we do, in our vocation as caring, creative human beings, we find our homes. Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, O God.

I'm told, that some people never find their gift, never find a way to express their creativity or love. I'm told that for some people it's all just mechanical necessity and meaning-leeched grey. No offering. No love. No expression. And because of that, for some, there is an unnatural harvest of destructive deeds.

You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. So, in what you have enabled me to do, in what you have enabled me to share, in what you have enabled me to offer in praise, I find a home. Let rain fall upon the roof, while I find shelter in you. Amen.

-ooOoo-

It is night, and beyond the reach of my hand, some things appear to be moving into place. I'm just praying in my garden that all will be well. I'm praying that this cup on the horizon is not something I will have to drink. I'm seeking the prayerful company of those who have walked these last three years with me. But beyond my hand, things are moving into place. My company is falling to sleep. Judas has

gone somewhere - I wish I could say I know not where, or for what purpose - but I do know. Beyond my praying hands, the Sanhedrin has long been calling for blood, the Romans have long been concerned about uprising. Beyond my praying hands it's ancient history and Cain killed Abel, that Noah got drunk, that golden calves were made, and David killed Uriah. Beyond my praying hands . . .

Beyond our hands is that thing called fate. O, if we don't call it fate, we call it the will of God, or necessity, or what was always going to be. Destiny! I don't want to make a home in that. Lord, if it is possible let this cup be taken from me! Yet not my will, but yours be done. This offends my heart. My heart is troubled. I was made for you, O God, and my heart is going to be restless until it rests in you. I seek shelter. I need to shut the door and pull the curtain. Rain is falling hard upon this roof, and all is disappearing. Amen.

-ooOoo-

There it is. We make our homes, we make our shelter in time and place. We find a dwelling in what we believe, and how we hope. We find a biding place in what we can do, how we can love. We flex against the things we would control, but can't. And as if reaching for a place in which we might find shelter, our hearts are restless.

And Jesus says:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father'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.

On the night of his betrayal, may God take these restless hearts, and shelter them in a home.