**A Place to Call Home**

All Saints' Day — St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Bremen, IN — 1 November 2026

*This sermon was preached at the old location on South Street in Bremen, Indiana*

Revelation 7:2-17
1 John 3:1-3

**Matthew 5:1-12**
Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.
2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:
3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

If you take a moment to listen, the sound of Leman Mint wrappers can still be heard in this place as eager ears prepare to hear the sermon. The theory behind the Leman mint, as taught by Ben Smith, Bob Unsicker, and likely generations before them, is that the football mint would last to about the end of Reverend Raymond Mueller's sermon. That's M-U-E-L-L-E-R, Mueller with a "u".

Is that what it means to find a spiritual home? To think back on what has been so as to be better informed as to where you are now? That might well be a part of it, but it isn't the heart of what makes a home. Consider this bit of history from the early formation of a congregation here in Bremen of the Yellow River as we consider what makes a congregation your spiritual home. A Lutheran missionary by the name of Friedrich Conrad Dietrich Wyneken was returning from mission work in Bertrand and Niles, Michigan, where he met with several families but was unable to form a congregation. He passed through Elkhart and Harris Prairie. After a brief visit, he headed south along State Highway 331 and came to Bremen of the Yellow River. "Almost all of the people of the town were ill with cholera, yet

the circuit rider preached to one of the largest congregations he was to assemble on his first missionary journey."[1] What a joy it was for the missionary to find a home among Christians here who wanted to gather around the Word and the Sacraments even in the midst of an epidemic. Though he did not stay, as the missionary call took him elsewhere, Pastor Wyneken found a temporary home here and helped to form the congregation that we know today.

In the international field, there are two separate but parallel questions that are often asked of travelers. "Where are you from?" and "What do you call home?" "Where are you from?" is a simple question to discover the nationality of a person, but the answer doesn't truly give the background of the person and his being. However, the answers to "What do you call home?" will open the world to your identity and will inform any person of who you truly present yourself to be. So, dear Christian, what do you call your spiritual home?

We can fill the conversation with many clichés and quotes. Home is where the heart is, or perhaps you'll click your heals and say, "There's no place like home." Soon we'll be hearing phrases like "Home for the holidays" and "I'll be home for Christmas." You might have a sign in your house that simply says "Home, Sweet home." There's also plenty of references to home in pop culture. Some of you might know a popular secular hymn by heart, that is to say in the mortal words of Phillip Phillips:

> [Settle down, it'll all be clear
> Don't pay no mind to the demons
> They fill you with fear]
> The trouble, it might drag you down
> If you get lost, you can always be found
> Just know you're not alone
> 'Cause I'm gonna make this place your home

Any given person is always seeking a place to call home. The home is a place where the soul can find rest, and not only the soul but the body and mind as well. But that definition of home can sometimes be elusive, especially if we allow the culture around us to define what home truly means. If you were to ask any of the children what home is right now, one might include costumes and the candy from tricker-or-treating. This will quickly be followed by Christmas lights and cookies. But does all that make a home?

As the young grow into the older adults, a powerful thing begins to take place. Nostalgia begins to set in. Nostalgia can quickly become the definition of home, or at least

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[1] https://revrobertesmith.substack.com/p/wyneken-heads-south-to-the-wabash

when it was the best of times. Beware of nostalgia! It will rob you of the present day and the confession that you make. Simply being here in this building can present that temptation to think of the “golden days” of the congregation where every activity was afforded to the young and old alike. Whereas the memories can be a powerful ally to the congregation, the nostalgia can easily lull the congregation into apathy toward the evangelism that ought to take place now. Nostalgia can begin to replace that which is truly home and present a false sense of security of what is, or what was in one’s life.

A brief example will suffice. When I was a young child in these pews (likely unwrapping my Leman mint for a Pastor Rohde sermon), I would occasionally sit with my grandparents, William and Helen Helmlinger. They sat alongside the Spiritus Gladius stained glass window. In fact, they were the ones who contributed to its installation. A family member today could easily look at that window and say, “I’m home. My family made that window possible.” So goes it with many of the dedicated items. However, the names on the plaques will soon fade into distant memory of those present and the nostalgia leaves a dull feeling, but it doesn’t make a home.

Our Lord did not say, “Blessed are those who remember the memory of loved ones past,” or “Blessed are those who spiritually remain in the golden years of a congregation.” Rather He says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted…Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” Jesus speaks to you in the present because the Church is always living in the time and place in which it is established. We have an eternal Gospel to proclaim regardless of the building in which we find ourselves.

This building was established as the third tabernacle of Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church. We gather here today to remember and rejoice in what has been, yet are called to proclaim Christ in the present. Many of you entered the building today through the South Street entrance. Did you happen to look up at the stained glass as you entered? You were entering into a building that has a confession of faith to make, an eternal truth to declare. What does it say? St Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession (Yes, it is a more modern window because it is in English). You, dear Christian, belong to a confession that has been going on for centuries. You are a member of a Church that has been redeemed by the blood of Jesus since the foundation of the world. It is not for nostalgia that we gather, but rather a Savior who establishes His Church on earth, even

here in Bremen of the Yellow River. You are gathering with the faithful around the throne of the Lamb who has been pierced for your transgressions, died to set you free, and rose again to conquer death and the grave. What makes this church a home is not a memory here or there, but rather the very Son of God who has come down from heaven and, through His death and resurrection, has become the chief cornerstone of this very congregation. Home for the Christian is where He finds Christ proclaimed as crucified and risen for the salvation of souls. Your home is in the wounds of Jesus Christ. The Church brings you to Him as you hear His Word. You enter into your home through baptism as you receive His Name placed upon your body and soul marking you as one redeemed by His Blood.

The church building is a sacred place because Christ comes to us here. So how do you prepare to come here to your spiritual home? Let's consider the Hebrews of the Old Testament. The Israelites (Hebrews) had 15 Psalms of Ascent which they would sing on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem. As they saw the Lord's Temple high upon Mount Zion at a distance, they sang to their Lord as they ascended to their spiritual home for the festivals. What do you sing as you prepare to go to the House of the Lord? What words do you have upon your lips as you prepare to be in the Lord's presence? For a Christian today, one could simply prepare by saying, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." It is here before the altar of the Lord that your soul will find rest and a home. You will be satisfied.

There is another beatitude found in Revelation which speaks thus: "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." It was here in this building many years ago that something strange happened. Pastor Roesener's wife passed out in the pew due to heat exhaustion right when the Divine Service came to a conclusion. Though a shock to the congregation, she found rest with her Lord that day and awaits the Day of Resurrection with all of the faithful. Perhaps this is the way to go, singing the words of Simeon and praying that the Lord come to take us to our heavenly home.

This leads us to consider the saints who have gone before us. Hear again the words of Jesus from the Gospel: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Long before there was a Saint Paul's with an apostrophe-S, there was the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant; the Church Militant always fighting to pass their faith to the next generation through the preaching of the Gospel, and the Church Triumphant always rejoicing over those who have repented and come to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who have gone before you have left behind the preaching of the Gospel, the very promise of salvation found only in Jesus Christ. There may be a day that comes where Saint Paul's with an apostrophe-S will not exist, but the preaching of that Gospel will continue. This is the beauty of the saints who have preceded us in death. They are not looking down on us wondering what we are doing. They are gathered around the throne in heaven waiting with joy for the resurrection of their bodies so that they can rejoice in the Lord's presence in all fullness.

Our temporary home, our tabernacle of faith, gathers for just a short time each week with the whole company of heaven. The presence of Christ descends to us upon this altar and unites us with the whole church on earth, both past and present. That is to say, when you commune here, you confess that Jesus is Lord, you receive His precious Body and Blood, and you unite yourself to the confession of the faithful, both those of the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant. When we consider what Christ gives to us here, we find our true home. Our home is in Christ. Home is where the Word is preached by beautiful feet, where the Medicine of Immortality is administered upon our lips and to our broken bodies. Home is the place which Christ is preparing; the place with a multitude too great to count. It is the place where you will see someone who was an elder to you in this life, that one person who taught you the Gospel for the first time. And you will meet their elder who taught them the Gospel. Home is receiving the robe of righteousness dipped in the blood of the Lamb. Everything leads to the throne of the Lamb who took away the sins of the world.

(The Leman Mint is likely almost finished…)

Home truly means to be with Jesus Christ for all eternity. And if you are with Jesus, then you are with the Father and the Holy Spirit. You are with the faithful family that He calls His own people. You are with the saints of the past because they are at the heavenly altar. You are with the saints in this age because the faithful gather frequently around His altar. Your home is with Jesus Christ your Lord. Amen.