

The First Sunday after Trinity  
St David's 29<sup>th</sup> May 2016  
Luke 7: 1-10

Every day's an endless stream  
Of cigarettes and magazines.  
And each town looks the same to me,  
the movies and the factories  
And every stranger's face I see  
reminds me that I long to be,

Homeward bound,  
I wish I was homeward bound,  
Home where my thought's escaping,  
Home where my music's playing,  
Home where my love lies waiting silently for me.

Who is it?

Simon and Garfunkel singing about their sense of alienation from life on the road. It's all meaningless. They don't have any connection with the anonymous cities they pass through. So they yearn for home, the place that gives context and meaning to their lives. Where their thoughts are escaping.

I've been spending some time recently editing the book that Jeanie is writing about her upbringing in Afghanistan, in India and Pakistan. One of the abiding themes of the book is her sense of not quite knowing where she belongs. Those fascinating vibrant colourful places made for a rich experience, but she had no roots.

Not really English nor really belonging anywhere else.

So I want to ask, "What makes a home for you?" Maybe you shared a home for many years with a partner who is no longer there, and children who have become independent. Is it the family home which comes to mind as you ponder that question, a golden age when the house was buzzing with talk and activity?

For many of us there may be a poignant mix of happiness, loss and pain around the idea of home. A longing for the past, where home really was.

The longing for home is part of our religious instincts. "In my Father's house are many rooms," says Jesus. Surely there is a room, a mansion, for me and those I love.

The Roman centurion was a long way from home, a hardened soldier on a distant posting; but he made a home for himself in Capernaum. The elders of the village come and tell Jesus about him, "he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us." An immigrant who became deeply connected with his new home.

We're not told about his family circumstances; presumably his wife if he had one, was back at home in Rome; but there was somebody with him in Capernaum, a slave whom he valued highly. Some commentators say that there is a suggestion of an intimate relationship between them. Matthew's gospel calls him a "boy". Anyway he was dear to the centurion, and his illness was a source of great distress. He was an important part of what home meant to

his master. It's love that makes a home, and sometimes love can be complicated.

Some time ago I took the funeral of a woman who had divorced her husband. And yet, when she was dying in a nursing home, it was the ex-husband who was a constant presence, his being there a source of comfort.

For some time she had told him, "This is not my home," but shortly before her death she said, "When you are here this does feel like home." His presence made her feel safe and enabled her to slip away peacefully.

Love only recognized in retrospect, love unconventional, the memory of love. And love complicated by past pain.

The American writer Marilynne Robinson in her wonderful novel called simply "Home" tells the story of the wayward son of a preacher in small town America. Jack was a wild boy, artful and devious. Now he is an alcoholic carrying twenty years of secrets. He returns for a visit to his ageing father, but their love for each other remains as complicated as it ever was, and they are perpetually at odds with each other; guilt, blame, anger and hope still raw, as they move beyond careful politeness towards mutual respect and a kind of reconciliation.

All these stories tell me that home may not be a place, so much as a state of mind. Being at home with yourself maybe, as well as being at home with family of all kinds. In God's house there are many dwelling places. We don't know them all yet, some are yet to come,

and some we may know very well, but not realize that God was in them all along.

In Matthew's gospel the centurion comes to Jesus. In Luke he sends messengers, but the message is the same, "I am not worthy that you should come under my roof, but just say the word and my servant shall be healed." At St Michael's we use those words before receiving communion, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof, but speak the word only, and thy servant shall be healed."

Many of us looking back at memories of home will feel unworthy. Mistakes, regrets, hurts and other uncomfortable thoughts may come to mind. Memories tarnished by our own or somebody else's weakness. But Jesus responded to the centurion with acceptance, compassion and healing.

So I have two thoughts to take away from our encounter with God this morning. Home is wherever we find loving community. Open your eyes, look with insight into the love that was and is in your life, and let it bring you joy.

And as you approach the altar rail this morning, open the door of your home and invite Jesus under your roof, that you might hear words of healing for your unworthiness.

Home, where love is waiting silently for me.