

5th Sunday of Easter – May 3, 2026

Acts 7:55-60; Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16; 1 Peter 2:1-10; John 14:1-14

New Song Episcopal Church – Coralville, IA

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Home; a dwelling; where you belong and can rest; ideally, a place to live, be loved, and be yourself. For us, as people of faith, being at home with God has always been a part of our story. Whether we have been with God, drifted away and long to return, or are making the trek back, home has been our aspiration, our journey, and our ultimate destination.

Our first home was the garden of Eden where Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the trees and talked with God in the cool of the evening. Then, home became a land promised to Abraham and Sarah. God's presence and blessing were with them in this land with the reminder in the night sky that their descendants would be more numerous than the stars.

After 400 years of slavery in Egypt, home was the longing to return to that land of milk & honey. As the children of Israel made their way through the wilderness, God dwelt with them on their journey. God was present with them as a pillar of cloud by day & pillar of fire by night leading them forward. As they settled in camps, God would come and speak to Moses at the tent of meeting. Later, in the more permanent camps, God dwelt with them in the tabernacle. God's presence became synonymous with the ark of the covenant that strengthened Israel's army in battle and remained at the center of Israel's life of worship.

Once King David established Jerusalem as the royal city, it was there that his son, Solomon, built the temple. The presence of God remained there for generations in the holy of holies. Through exile and the years after their return from Babylon, God dwelt with the children of Israel in the Jerusalem Temple,

admonishing them through the prophets
and calling them to worship and covenantal relationship.

Then, in the fullness of time, as the gospel of John tells us, God sent the Word to become flesh and dwell among us. What a huge paradigm shift for Israel. No longer was the presence of God to be found in a place, in a particular location. The presence of God was now embodied. Jesus came from the Father to make the Father's heart and desire for the world known. The container, so to speak, was no longer a geographic point, but a person.

This was a difficult concept for the Jews to accept and believe.

Even Jesus' closest disciples struggled to grasp that seeing Jesus is seeing God despite witnessing the signs that Jesus performed and listening to his teachings. Jesus told them, "If you have seen me you have seen the Father. For I am in the Father and the Father is in me."

Now, as Jesus approached his death, he pushed his disciples to make additional monumental leaps in their belief. Jesus told them that he is going away and that they could not follow him now. As those who had traveled with him for three years, this must have been quite a shock to the system.

Jesus said to them, "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself so that where I am, you also may be. And you know the place to where I am going."

Was Jesus talking about his death & going to heaven? Was this the way he was returning to God the Father? This seems to be the case. If so, then, when did Jesus plan on coming back and taking his disciples to himself? Was his return what we see later in the gospel when he appears as the resurrected Lord? Or would it occur much later at the end of time with the coming of Christ on judgement day?

Neither of these options seems accurate according to the gospel of John. Or does Jesus return for his disciples at their own deaths? Does Jesus come and help them cross the threshold of death to enter life eternal with God?

This is the version that many of us have heard in funeral sermons based on this passage. I do believe this is true. Jesus will accompany us on our journey through death to our Father's house with its many dwelling places.

As followers of Jesus, this belief does offer us much comfort and peace.

But I also believe that Jesus offered the first disciples and us far more than this assurance of what happens at our deaths.

Later in John 14, Jesus says, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." With this monumental shift, the presence of God is no longer contained in the flesh and blood person of Jesus. Instead, Jesus & the Father come and make their home in us. Each of us, then, becomes a dwelling place for God. God takes up residence in our hearts. Jesus and the Father live in us and share with us their life. And by their acting through us, they make God's presence and God's love known in the world.

Jesus and the Father have come and made their home in you and me. Whoa! Can you really take in what this means? If that is true, how might it change your relationship with yourself? Play with this analogy a bit.

How might you welcome and make room for God within you? Is your house a little cluttered? What fears, grudges, or shame-filled memories need to be purged and forgotten? Does your inner critic need an eviction notice?

How might Jesus and the Father choose to renovate and redecorate your inner space? How might you discover beauty there where you've never recognized it before? With houseguests like these, how might they help you open your doors wide to welcome in others to share your life, your love, and the essence of who you are?

Jesus and the Father have come and made their home in us.

Each of us is a dwelling place for God.

May we bow in reverence at that truth in ourselves and in others.

May we revel and delight in the fact

that Jesus and the Father long to share this home with us.

May others encounter the God of love in us.