

## ***Sermon***

### ***True Belonging***

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Bacon Memorial Presbyterian Church

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Our scripture today is a rare glimpse into the young Jesus' life. He is an adolescent and in this passage – he goes to Temple with his parents during Passover and at some point, goes missing. Missing for three days – Jesus' parents are frantic as any parent would be – looking for him everywhere and finally they return to Temple and find Jesus there – calmly sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions – as our scripture tells us. And as any parent would, they reprimand Jesus who is actually quite surprised they didn't realize where he was – didn't realize he was indeed home within the Temple walls, home listening to the teachings they offered. He reluctantly returns to Mary and Joseph's home but as we know, he will not stay for long. The artwork in your bulletin shows Mary with a tear – that moment when a mother realizes she can't hold on to a child that must fulfill their calling and leave them as they do. She knew when she conceived that this day would come but it never matters – those moments are difficult – letting go of something we love so much.

Home – looking for a home – a place to live. There is a television show I enjoy watching called Love it or List it. It's a show where people are trying to decide if they should renovate their existing home to make it better suited for their family or if they should sell it and move onto something better, bigger, in a different location, something like that. When Joe and I got married, we sort of approached home in this way...I had a house in Grand Island and he in

Tonawanda. I had only lived on Grand Island for a few years and while it was a lovely home, my daughters nor I ever really embraced it as home. That's where things sort of fell apart for us – where my marriage fell apart, so it didn't feel like home anymore and we were hoping for a fresh start somewhere else. Well Joe had a nice home but it needed quite a bit of renovation for it to work for all of us. So we did renovate and after doing so, like the show, we realized it wasn't quite enough space for us. So we started to look in Tonawanda for a bigger home. Meanwhile, we were spending all of our free time with my sister out in Newfane...we talked about moving to the country maybe when we retired...so one day, after spending so much time out that way, I said to him – what do you think about moving our retirement plans up a bit, deal with the commute and look for a home where we love to be. And low and behold, everything fell into place, and we found the home we live in today...and it has been our sanctuary ever since. You see, we were just meant to live in the country – both of us knew that was where we wanted to be – in the peaceful, quiet of the country – we were done with living neighbor on top of neighbor – and wanted to tranquility of country living. Now for many of you, the idea of living in the country, the idea of a 50 minute commute to work each way – well that would be a big no. That's not home for you, that's not what you need.

Choosing a home is a challenge – for us. A place to hang our hat so to speak. But for Jesus, he never really stayed in one place for long – throughout his ministry – Jesus never really had a home or at least not an address. But its very clear throughout his life, that he was very much at home in His father's house. In the presence of God – having God in His heart, in his mind, at the center of his entire being.

And what about those who have been forced out of their home and placed in a facility because they need help to get through their daily needs. How can they find comfort living in a setting where they give up some of their freedoms – when they want to eat, when they want to get dressed – who and when they get to visit with friends and family. How can this feel like home to them?

Through our advent journey I spent time talking about my childhood home – and while it was hard to let it go after my dad died, I knew I had to. It wasn't really where I wanted to live – it wasn't the **house** I was homesick for after all – it was my family – it was my parents and the feeling they created for us – we could have lived on the moon – the house had little to do with it. And as I grew, like Jesus, I gravitated to worship – to church – to others who had a belief like me – who relied upon their faith to get them through good times and bad – joined with others to serve one another – to serve community.

For those who aren't living where they want to live, or those who are trying to make that tough decision about what's next – downsizing, a senior apartment, assisted living or moving out on your own for the first time, what home is may not be exactly what we had hoped for. So as we think about home – maybe we should be more like Jesus and less like TV shows that focus on how many bedrooms and bathrooms and think more of where we truly belong – where will I be safe, where will I thrive in my senior years, where is a safe, affordable place for me as I venture out on my own for the first time - don't think so much about where but think about the what – and think more about where I feel alive – where do I belong? Where does my heart tell me to be... when I am with my brothers and sisters of faith...how do I feel when I'm volunteering to help with our

Bacon's Blessing program or the Salvation Army toy drive or the Christmas boxes?  
Do I feel I belong there?

As we wind down through our Christmas season, I'd like to share another poem with you from Rev. Sarah Speed from our Sanctified Art Close to Home devotional entitled Chosen Home...she writes,

***There are a million ways to choose a home. We choose to make it work. We hang a wreath on the door of our shoebox apartment. We invite company over. We ask, "Would you like coffee with that?" We choose to make the most of it. We take up watercoloring or kickboxing and show up to class. We mostly embarrass ourselves, but we were there.***

***We choose to not go it alone. We sign up to volunteer and make ourselves a nametag. We slide weary bones into weary church pews. We shake hands and say hello. We let the music cover us, like a blanket, or a prayer. We choose to love what we have. We look in the mirror and speak kindly to our body. We buy flowers at the market and arrange them in jelly jars. There are a million ways to choose a home. So like Jesus in the temple who chose to stay, who chose to speak, who took up space because he knew he was home, I invite you to do the same. Put your body where your soul feels alive. Give yourself permission to take up space there. Stay, as long as it takes. Return, as often as you need. There are a million ways to choose a home. Choose wisely. We need you here.***

Amen