

Take a look at the picture. It is a collage of houses. Houses come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Maybe your house looks like one of these, and maybe it doesn't. It takes more than a roof over your head and four walls to make a house a home. Homes are special. They are the place where we know we belong, where we will be welcomed and loved.

Maybe that is why we talk about people being "Homesick." This is the time of the year when kids who go to summer camp can get homesick. It won't be long before college freshmen will head out for college for the first and a lot of them will get homesick. Dorothy was homesick in the Wizard of Oz and kept repeating the phrase, "There's no place like home." I didn't get homesick when I went away for college for the first time, but I am like a homing pigeon when I've been away from home for a while. I can't wait to get back. I'll keep driving rather than spend an extra night on the road. Maybe you're the same way.

Some people get homesick. Other people are homeless. A homeless person struggles with identity. They have no "home." They don't even have an address to call their own. Because they don't have a home, they can feel like they don't belong. Life can be difficult when you don't have a home.

The Book of Genesis, the first book in the Old Testament, tells us the story of our first home. After God had created the heaven and the earth, he made the first people and gave them a home. Genesis 2:15 tells us, **"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."** That is why we love the earth, because God made it our first home. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve weren't allowed to stay in the Garden. God told them, **"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."** (Genesis 2:16-17) Of course they disobeyed the Lord, ate the forbidden fruit, and were expelled from the Garden. They lost their perfect home and must have been the first to ever be homesick. Like Adam and Eve, we've fallen, made a mess of our world and it will take God to get it right again.

The problem has gotten bigger. Science can tell us about the universe. It can give us an idea of how expansive it is and theorize that it is all the result of a "big bang" that happened billions of years. They can tell us how they think the universe was made, but they can't tell us how to make the universe our home. If we really believe that everything just happened over an extremely long period of time by chance, we have a problem. Then we were not created by God. We don't have a soul. We're homeless people who don't really belong in this massive universe. Like E.T., we long to go home but don't even know where home is.

God doesn't want us to feel homeless. That is why Jesus told one of his most famous stories, the story of the Lost or Runaway Son. We read it just a couple minutes ago in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 15. The Son cashed in his inheritance while his father was still alive, ran away from his father's house, and blew all of his money. Things got so bad that all of his so called friends deserted him and the only job he could get was slopping the hogs. He didn't even make enough money to feed himself regularly. So he got homesick and decided to return home. He didn't expect to be welcomed back as a son. He hoped his father would welcome him back and hire him to be a servant. Little did the runaway son know that his father kept an eye out for him every day. He must have been surprised when his father welcomed him with open arms and threw a big party in his honor.

Like the runaway son, our hearts need to be repaired. We long for home but aren't sure how to get there. Are you homesick? Do you know how to get to heaven? **(Drama: "Is That Your Final Answer?" by Lori L. Call. Drama Ministry, at 10:00)** Jesus said, **"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am."** (John 14:1-3 NLT)

Putting our trust in Jesus is like taking a leap of faith. It calls for a total commitment. Just as a hang glider has to jump from the edge of the cliff to take off, so we have to jump in faith to the Lord. You have to leap before you can soar. When we leap in faith into the Lord's arms, he helps us soar to new heights.

God knows that is not always easy for us. He recognizes the fact that there are times when we have our doubts. Last week we read the story of the father who brought his son to Jesus and asked for help to cure him. The father said, **"Have mercy on us and help us, if you can."** (Mark 9:22 NLT) Jesus didn't walk away from the man who doubted. He didn't give him a long lecture on faith and trust. Instead Jesus spoke to the son, healed him and gave him back to his father.

God doesn't want us to feel lost or homeless. Jesus said this about himself, **"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."** (Luke 19:10) We need to show that same kind of love and compassion to those who are lost without the Lord, to those who have their doubts. Jude 22 tells us, **"You must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering."** (NLT)

So what's it going to be? Are you going to go through life trying to make your own way, doing things your own way, feeling homesick and homeless? Or will you take the leap of faith into the arms of the Lord who came to rescue you, into the waiting arms of God the Father who wants to welcome you home? Jesus invites us home. Will you accept His invitation? After all, there is no place like home?