



**Sermon preached by Revd Chris Baker on 3rd May 2026**

**Readings:** *1 Peter 2.4-10, John 14.1-14*

Where, for you, is home? For many people, home isn't where they live – though that obviously is their home. But that's not what I mean. Home can have a special meaning. Home is more about where people have come from, maybe where they were born, where they made their first friendships, where they first felt loved and safe and secure. Where their parents were, or siblings. Or sometimes it's about the very land, the colour of the soil, the scent of the sea, the brilliant vistas. I well remember the wife of an elder at the church in Falmouth – a lovely lady who had lived in Falmouth all her married life, but when asked where home was, she would laugh and say, 'Wales, of course' and her accent would provide the evidence. Home, some say, is where the heart is and, as we heard (in the Sharing Together time), for David Livingstone home was not Blantyre but Chitambo, in Africa. That's where his heart was. We remember that he prayed 'God send me anywhere, only go with me. Lay any burden on me, only sustain me. Sever any tie in my heart, except the tie that binds my heart to yours.'

The disciples were sad at heart; they were having a torrid time. There was tension in the air. Things were moving towards a climax and they were sitting having a meal with Jesus when he got up, took off his outer robe and tied a towel around his waist. They probably thought, 'Whatever's he doing?' and he began to wash the disciples' feet. But hey, that was a slave's job. He was, well, who was he? Their Teacher, their Master, their Lord. It was awkward, it was embarrassing. Peter tried to protest but Jesus insisted and he told his friends that he was giving them an example, a lesson to remember and they certainly would not forget it. I mean, would we .... forget? Then he went on to speak about betrayal: one of them would do the awful deed – one who had been washed, one who had shared bread with them all. It was just dreadful and Peter, surely his staunchest supporter, was told he too would deny Jesus within a few hours, not just once, but three times. They knew this was the end. They had known it was dangerous following Jesus and they had given up everything to be with him but now it was all falling apart and they would be left alone with no security, no safety net, no home.

But then, Jesus changes the mood. 'Come on. Don't let your hearts be troubled. Don't worry'. Often people found it hard to follow what Jesus was saying. Perhaps last week you were thinking of Jesus as the Good Shepherd but as he expanded on that theme, we hear that people found it difficult. They did not understand what he was saying to them. Now Jesus, in company with his closest friends, those who had been with him for quite a while, speaks in challenging ways. What he says is mysterious - a marvellous mystery which really we don't need to understand so much as to accept. He says 'Now, believe in God. Believe in me. There are many dwelling places in my Father's house. If that wasn't so, would I have told you that I'm going ahead to prepare a place for you? I'm not going to abandon you. I'll come and take you to myself, so that we can be together'. Doesn't that just begin to sound wonderful? The key to this wonder lies in love, in love and trust in Jesus. Belief in Jesus, belief in his mighty deeds, believing in his gracious words, believing in the saving grace as he died on the cross is all wonderful and good but now we are being taken beyond that stage. We are being led from faith, from a belief, into a relationship, an intimate relationship with God. Time and again Jesus says, 'Look, I and the Father are One. I am in the Father and you in me and I in you.'

Back in 1962 Elvis Presley had a hit with a song which began "Home is where the heart is and my heart is anywhere you are." He was thinking of the power of love bringing two people together, being united, sharing love, sharing life. But I think he was wiser than he knew, for our home is with Jesus and so our hearts are wherever he is. To love and trust Jesus and keep his word is to be at home with him.

But inevitably there are questions. How do we get from A to B? And Thomas puts that question into words. 'Lord, we don't know where you are going so how can we know the way? How can we get to follow you?' and Jesus comes back with perhaps the greatest of the I AM saying. 'I AM the way, and

the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me and if you know me, you also know my Father.’ The mystery continues.

I AM the Way. John the Baptist had used Isaiah as his inspiration as he explained himself to the investigators sent from Jerusalem, wanting to know who he was. He declared ‘I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord.’ The way OF the Lord. The way TO the Lord. The way to God. John had prepared the way and Jesus followed him up, explaining that he is that way, the way to God. And by his words and lifestyle, he has been demonstrating that way throughout his life culminating in that dramatic episode of washing his disciples’ feet. It is the way of love and service, the way of humility and peace, the way undergirded by the strength and power of God, but yet it is also the way of suffering because love and obedience will take him to the cross, that old rugged cross of agony and pain

In the opening of his version of the gospel John declares that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth. Here was truth, ultimate truth. Albert Schweitzer wrote that ‘Any who venture to look the historical Jesus in the face and to listen to what he may have to teach ... soon cease to ask what this strange-seeming Jesus can still be to them. They learn to know Him as One who claims authority over them. The true relation to Him is to be taken possession of by Him. Christian piety of any and every sort is valuable only so far as it means the surrender of our will to His.’

And in that truth is our life. And in that life, we acknowledge the enormous difficulties we can face, because there inevitably comes a time when our faith, our beliefs come up against the world. We seek peace in a world of violence, whether that violence be bombing to destroy a nation or wielding a knife to maim or kill. We seek honesty and integrity in a world of falsehood and misinformation. We seek love in a world where hatred lurks. We seek to break down walls even as people build barriers. But God has placed us here and now to love and serve him and his creation. In his great prayer for his disciples Jesus acknowledges that we are in the world and he prays for our protection. ‘Protect them’ he prays to the Father, ‘in your name so that they may be one, as we are one.’ This theme of unity in love permeates the gospel and finds a special depth in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

In our recent discussion group some of us thought about the significance of this sacrament – a sacrament we shall shortly share. It was clear that over the years and indeed even within this congregation there have been and are various views, various ideas about its significance. What does it mean? John, as we know, does not have a description of the Lord’s Supper as do the other gospel writers. Yet he records Jesus as giving us another of the great I AM sayings – ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.’ Once again there were people who found this difficult, even offensive, and many who had been disciples turned away and no longer followed him. So there is, in this sacrament, a challenge, but above all there is the gift, the gift of life with Jesus, and thus also with the Father.

The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is never a mere re-enactment of the events in that Upper Room in Jerusalem. Shortly we will welcome and receive the bread and the wine and as we receive them in silence, let us take the opportunity to contemplate the meaning for each of us. Let us ponder the presence of the Lord in our hands and hearts. Let us embrace the marvellous mystery and give glory to our heavenly Father, that in his presence we find our true home.

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