

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



January 30, 2022

HOME

can we really not go home again?

by Drew Downs

Home is familiar. But that isn't what attracts us to it.

It is the connection. That sense of connection we have to a place, a people, an environment. Buildings or trees. Lakes or roads. We feel connected to this thing we call home.

Home can be a town or a house or a family. It can also be a church or a bar or a coffee

shop. It really *can* be anything. As long as there is a connection and deep longing.

When we say that "you can never go home again," what we're trying to say is that home is never like we remember it. Our connection to home can't *go back* to what it was.

Knowing this, however, can make it easier when we try. Acknowledging that home, like us, has grown since we last saw each other.

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Winter 2022

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

I am so grateful for another successful annual meeting of the congregation this past week! And I appreciate the challenge of gathering in a **both/and** format was *a bit* different. But we have learned a great deal from it and I am confident that our *next one* will be even better.

At the meeting, we elected Israel Ditzler, Leah Myers, and Robin Rolt to three-year terms on the vestry and Bill Allen to a one-year term. At the vestry meeting afterward, we elected the remaining officers for the next year.

Senior Warden: Linda Airhart

Junior Warden: Bill Allen

Clerk: Michelle Moulton

Treasurer: Peggy Allen

We also elected delegates to represent St. Stephen's to our Diocesan Neighborhood: our regional organizing structure. Delegates will attend to the meetings and ministry of this body, which includes the raising up of leaders to the diocese and building local ministry priorities. Our delegation team will consist of John Hegedus, Andrew Miller, and Robin Rolt.

Lastly, the vestry decided at its January meeting to draw from the endowment for the budget. This is new territory for St. Stephen's, but it is *the norm* for most. The diocese itself has been taking a draw for years. We continue to balance our twin calls to generosity and prudent stewardship with humility and the grace of God.

Drew

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Winter 2022

FOR SUNDAY

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

January 30, 2022

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you govern all things both in heaven and on earth: Mercifully hear the supplications of your people, and in our time grant us your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

From Luke 4:21-30

"He said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!'"

Reflection

Jesus visits the synagogue in his hometown and is greeted with a warm welcome. He reads from the scroll of Isaiah and proclaims that "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" and all are amazed. They start wondering why he speaks with such authority. If we've ever seen a kid return home a mature adult, we *know* what that is like.

So how do we get from this moment to their attempt to throw Jesus off a cliff?

Well, he says that they're going to want him to make magic happen for them and he might not.

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

But how is such an idea worth killing over?

I don't think the Scripture answers that for us. It simply points out that they tried. But I think we can confidently connect some of the dots.

This story depends on Jesus understanding the assumptions of the people.

1. That they will associate him with his family.
 2. They will ask him to do what he has done for others.
 3. And it won't work.
 4. So they will treat him like their ancestors treated prophets (try to kill him).
- And then it proves him right.

At the heart of this story we don't find logic. We find passion *and* fear. Because the people are motivated to *gain* what others have. And they *assume* they have an in with Jesus.

This is why I'm drawn to the first statement Jesus makes, which is so familiar to us: that they will say to him: "Doctor, cure yourself!" It doesn't *logically* connect with what Jesus is dealing with *unless* we realize that he is revealing *their defensiveness*. He is about to name the sin behind their actions and starts by essentially saying: *you are going to whatabout me and assume I am guilty of **your** sin.*

This is a familiar tactic to anyone who has talked about hard things with others. This deflection of pseudo-rational rhetoric appeals to an unbalanced logic under the guise of balance. Because Jesus isn't the one judging them or trying to kill them. But they will twist it to justify *their own* anger and attempted murder.

This is how all manner of people justify doing things we claim we despise. We simply claim the other guy started it. And **we** get to finish it.

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