

Homemaker

First of four sermons in the series *“At Home at Church”*

by the Rev. Dr. Jon M. Fancher

Rocky River Presbyterian Church, Rocky River, Ohio

September 9, 2018

- Titus 3:1-8 Good News Translation Remind your people to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey them, and to be ready to do good in every way. ²Tell them not to speak evil of anyone, but to be peaceful and friendly, and always to show a gentle attitude toward everyone. ³For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, and wrong. We were slaves to passions and pleasures of all kinds. We spent our lives in malice and envy; others hated us and we hated them. ⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior was revealed, ⁵he saved us. It was not because of any good deeds that we ourselves had done, but because of his own mercy that he saved us, through the Holy Spirit, who gives us new birth and new life by washing us. ⁶God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that by his grace we might be put right with God and come into possession of the eternal life we hope for. ⁸This is a true saying. I want you to give special emphasis to these matters, so that those who believe in God may be concerned with giving their time to doing good deeds, which are good and useful for everyone.
- Colossians 3:12-17 Good News Translation ¹²You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. ¹⁴And to all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity. ¹⁵The peace that Christ gives is to guide you in the decisions you make; for it is to this peace that God has called you together in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Christ's message in all its richness must live in your hearts. Teach and instruct one another with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing to God with thanksgiving in your hearts. ¹⁷Everything you do or say, then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through him to God the Father.
- Sermon-in-a-sentence: God graces us with the ability to strive to fashion home lives that reflect the values of Jesus.

It can be a powerful thing – the experience of coming home.

Maybe you've heard a song written by Mel Tillis and Danny Dill called "Detroit City." It's been recorded many times by the likes of Charley Pride, Porter Wagoner; my favorite is by Tom Jones. The song captures the loneliness and isolation of a rural Southerner living and working in the industrial North, opening with the line "Last night I went to sleep in Detroit City." Its plaintive refrain cries over and over, "Oh, how I wanna go home."¹

We come home in lots of ways. For instance,

- The kids who just went off to college for the first time will come home in a few months as they've never come home before. They will, at the same time, be right back where they know they belong, and yet they'll also know the experience of going off to college will cause "home" never to be exactly the same as it once was for them. We come home in lots of ways.
- If you've been a patient in a hospital or rehab center, you can't wait to be able to come home to familiar surroundings where there's more peace and quiet and where you have more control over your life than when you were laid up.

¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detroit_City_\(song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detroit_City_(song))

- For some of you, being in worship with others here is a way of experiencing the connection with family that you associate with what home used to feel like for you.
- Maybe you've had the experience Mary and I had back in July when we headed home from our vacation trip through the Deep South. We had a fascinating time there... but we also couldn't wait to get home to *our* bed and *our* pillows and *our* kitchen... *and* to Parker the Dog.
- If you've traveled overseas, I don't care how wonderful your trip was, there's something particularly satisfying about passing through Customs and Border Control at JFK or O'Hare or Atlanta and being back in the familiar sights and sounds and aromas and flavors of the U.S. of A.
- An International Space Station astronaut, Nicole Stott, puts the satisfaction of coming home on a grander scale. She notes, "We have this connection to Earth. I mean, it's our home. And I don't know how you can come back and not, in some way, be changed."²

After a summer of vacation trips and cottage stays, hours spent in the air or on the waters, September functions as a time of "homecoming." We come back home to the routine of school and lessons and practices and rehearsals. We fall back into the pattern of the daily commute. We resume our routine of a morning on the walking track or getting lunch at the Senior Center. And we come home to our church home – to worship, to classes, to social activities, to rehearsals, to groups and circles and fellowships and committees. We come home to this fellowship, this community where our participation in is meaningful to us and our presence is meaningful to others. We experience again the feeling of being "At Home at Church."

This "homecoming" sermon series looks at various dimensions of "home," beginning this week with the idea of a "homemaker" – what makes a place feel like "home"?

Whether you're more familiar with the old television show "Leave It to Beaver" of the 1950s and '60s, or the dramatic comedy movie "Pleasantville" of the late 1990s, both depict the characters of "homemakers." A "homemaker" referred to the role filled by one spouse – invariably the wife – who didn't have a paying job outside the home. The homemaker was assumed to be responsible for the household's shopping and cooking and cleaning and laundry... and June Cleaver always went about her homemaking duties in a dress, high heels, earrings and pearls. Indeed, there was a time when it was a source of pride for women to respond to questions about their occupation by replying, "I'm a homemaker."

Nowadays going about the process of being a homemaker is quite different. Let's say a young couple or some roommates intend to set up homemaking in an apartment or starter home. What constitutes homemaking for them? First they determine what internet service will provide sufficient WiFi for their mobile devices and how they'll configure their large screen TV and game system. Only then they might concern themselves with what they'll sleep on or whether they'll need any pots and pans and dishes. Since both occupants most likely have jobs outside the home, neither fills the once-traditional role of homemaker. More than ever, couples today have to negotiate roles and responsibilities in order to make a house a "home."

To make a home it takes more than four walls, a floor, a ceiling and a door. After all, as the Burt Bacharach/Hal David song says,

A chair is still a chair
Even though there's no-one sitting there
But a chair is not a house
And a house is not a home...³

How can we fashion a house into a home that is more than just a dormitory for sleeping but rather a home providing a place of nurture and security and comfort? What can we do to be home-makers? In the familiar passage from the New Testament book of Colossians we were told of ten qualities we should be sure are present in our homes – yes, ten. Verse 12 actually lists only five. Because we are "the people of God," as it says, we should outfit ourselves with "compassion, kindness, humility,

² <https://www.phactual.com/14-awe-filled-quotes-about-the-overview-effect-from-outer-space/>

³ <http://www.metrolyrics.com/a-house-is-not-a-home-lyrics-dionne-warwick.html>

gentleness, and patience.” Don’t you agree that a place of nurture and security and comfort would be characterized by compassionate and kind behavior, humble and gentle attitudes, all administered with patience?

Then the writer of Colossians tacks on five additional qualities that transform the space of a house into a godly home. But because those five additional qualities not listed sequentially, we might overlook them. So let’s go hunting. Actually, I’ve made the hunting a little easier by bolding the text in your bulletin. You’ll see in verse 13 that in addition to compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience as qualities that make a home a Christian home, we’re also encouraged to extend **tolerance** toward each other, even **forgive** one another. It strikes me as funny that it’s not until verse 14 that Paul adds the necessity of **love** into the mix – “love which binds all things together in perfect unity.” Paul then reminds the Colossians to be guided by peace – respectful co-existence, a sincere desire for the welfare of others. Finally, in this list of qualities needed to make a home a Christian home, Paul tops off the list by reminding us to be deliberate, to be active, to be sincere in looking for reasons to be thankful – thankful for your life, thankful for others in your life, thankful that your life unfolds within the realm of God’s constant care.

Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience....

Tolerance, forgiveness, love, peace, thankfulness....

Well, none of us would dispute that those would be great ground rules to live by. But let’s get real. The reality is that daily life wears us down. It stresses us out. We get fed up, ticked off, frustrated, exhausted, short-tempered, disappointed, depressed, resentful, envious, angry, anxious, selfish. Any of those realities can push compassion to the side, can short-circuit our patience, can disrupt our sense of peace. Then what can we do to be Christian homemakers?

This morning we also heard a section of Paul’s letter to his missionary companion Titus. In Titus Chapter 3 Paul reminds him – and us--that the work of homemaking is not something that we achieve because we’re just so darned good at being decent. Paul reminds Titus that God’s grace saves us; God’s grace lifts us up; God’s grace washes over us – indeed, he writes, “God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that by his grace we might be put right with God and come into possession of the eternal life we hope for.”⁴

So we can *try* to remember that list of ten characteristics that make our home life more Christ-like. Now, if you’re like me, you have a hard time remembering three or four things you meant to write down on your grocery list, so you’re probably not going to recall Paul’s list of ten homemaking guidelines. Yes, we certainly want to strive to create a home life that reflects the spirit of Jesus, but we’re going to forget some things, we’re going to slip up from time to time.

But that’s okay. Our ability to live Christ-like lives is not totally dependent on our intellect or our goodness. Our ability to be Christ-like homemakers comes from what God wants to do *through* us. Recall Paul’s words of grace to Titus where he wrote,

⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior was revealed, ⁵ he saved us. It was not because of any good deeds that we ourselves had done, but because of his own mercy that he saved us, through the Holy Spirit, who gives us new birth and new life by washing us. ⁶ God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that by his grace we might be put right with God and come into possession of the eternal life we hope for.⁵

We all “wanna go home” to a home life that shows how Jesus is making a difference in who we are and how we live. Thanks be to God for pouring “out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Savior,” so that we can strive to be homemakers who encourage...

compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience...

tolerance, forgiveness, love, peace, thankfulness.

[Sermons: se20180909; © 2018 Jon M. Fancher]

⁴ Titus 3:6-7 Good News Translation

⁵ Titus 3:4-7 Good News Translation