

SPARE ROOMS

5/10/20 ~ St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Encinitas, CA (*Livestreamed*)
Easter 5 (A): Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

Every few years I wake up from a dream about finding extra rooms in my home. The dream shifts and changes each time I have it, but, typically, I'm living in a fairly small apartment—a place that I've lived in for quite some time—but suddenly, I become aware of more space. Sometimes the rooms are filled with furniture, beds, and boxes of clothes I'd forgotten I had.

I'm never clear about why I didn't realize these rooms existed, what I might do with them, or whether the extra space even belongs to me. What has always been clear to me, however, is that this dream shows up in my subconscious whenever I'm feeling constrained in my daily living. I've had the dream when I felt like I was in a dead-end job, when I was in a dating relationship that was no longer fulfilling, and when I was struggling to get myself out of a giant pit of debt.

This dream popped into my head as soon as I read this week's reading: "My Father's house has room to spare." With our online worship, we've been using a translation of the Bible called the Common English Bible or CEB. We typically use the Newly Revised Standard Version or NRSV, but because we're hoping to create a more family-friendly liturgy with this Iona service, we've been using the CEB.

I tell you all that because the same line in the NRSV reads: "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places," so while I've preached on this text many times (it's a common passage for funerals), I hadn't made the connection to my recurring dream.

So, Jesus is sitting there in the Upper Room with his disciples; they've enjoyed what will become known as the Last Supper; he's washed their feet and explained that they are no longer students, but friends; and, now, he's trying to help them understand that while he's going to be leaving them, he will still be with them. It's the first of many messages about that things are already happening, while still, not yet completed. Jesus promises, "you are already with God, and, yet, you're not fully with God."

The cover image on this morning's bulletin captures this tension of being on the threshold. Standing in one space, being able to see into the next area, but fully located on this side. That is the "already; not yet" world of God. We see the promise of what is, while we are still here. We might not fully understand what that means for us, but we can take in the significance of that.

When I re-visit my dream, I realize that one of the messages is that until I am aware of the extra space in my life, I can't occupy that space. I have to become aware of the space before I can even begin to contemplate being in it.

The passage from 1st Peter also includes a movement across a threshold. That audience wasn't yet aware they could even be God's people, but once they're ready to acknowledge that, they become God's people. And once they've stepped across that threshold of awareness, they become part of the cornerstone—the Living stones that make up the Body of Christ. The

author says, “You have become ~~this~~ [God’s] people so that you may speak of the wonderful acts of the one who called you out of darkness into ~~his~~ [God’s] amazing light.”

This role of sharing God’s love for the world with those around us is echoed in the passage from John. It’s a little tricky because the one line, in particular, is often lifted up out of its context. That line reads: “When you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it,” which might leave us thinking Jesus is saying, “whatever you desire in your personal life will be given to you.”

But put back in context, Jesus says, “I assure you that whoever believes in me will do the works that I do. They will do even greater works than these.” Then he explains, that the disciples will do even greater works—we will do even greater works—because Jesus will be with the Creator helping us do these things.

What looks like an invitation to have anything we want in life: fast cars, big boats, and huge mansions, is actually Jesus’s call to help humanity in ways he wasn’t able. So, he says, as you do this, trust God and ask for the help you need to accomplish those things, and I will be beside you.

What I’ve come to understand about my dream is that I don’t need to know how I might make use of those extra rooms, I just need to be reminded that they are available to me, and in that knowing, I experience more spaciousness in my waking life. I might not be aware of what options are available to me, but I remember there are options. And with those options—and God’s help—the sky’s the limit on what I can accomplish!

May you discover God’s spaciousness in your own life even as our physical lives are currently constrained. I recommend spending some time with today’s Psalm this week as you become more aware of the particular threshold to which God has called you. That Psalm can be your prayer: “My future is in your hands [Oh, God]; Shine your face on your servant; save me by your faithful love!”

-AMEN

Readings (*Common English Bible Translation*)

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

I take refuge in you, LORD.

Please never let me be put to shame.

Rescue me by your righteousness!

Listen closely to me!

Deliver me quickly;

be a rock that protects me;

be a strong fortress that saves me!

You are definitely my rock and my fortress.

Guide me and lead me for the sake of your good name!

Get me out of this net that’s been set for me

because you are my protective fortress.

I entrust my spirit into your hands;

you, LORD, God of faithfulness—
you have saved me.

My future is in your hands.
Don't hand me over to my enemies,
to all who are out to get me!
Shine your face on your servant;
save me by your faithful love!

1 Peter 2:2-10

Instead, like a newborn baby, desire the pure milk of the word. Nourished by it, you will grow into salvation, since you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Now you are coming to him as to a living stone. Even though this stone was rejected by humans, from God's perspective it is chosen, valuable. You yourselves are being built like living stones into a spiritual temple. You are being made into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Thus it is written in scripture, *Look! I am laying a cornerstone in Zion, chosen, valuable. The person who believes in him will never be shamed.* So God honors you who believe. For those who refuse to believe, though, the stone the builders tossed aside has become the capstone. This is a stone that makes people stumble and a rock that makes them fall. Because they refuse to believe in the word, they stumble. Indeed, this is the end to which they were appointed. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God's own possession. You have become this people so that you may speak of the wonderful acts of the one who called you out of darkness into his amazing light. Once you weren't a people, but now you are God's people. Once you hadn't received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

John 14:1-14

"Don't be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. My Father's house has room to spare. If that weren't the case, would I have told you that I'm going to prepare a place for you? When I go to prepare a place for you, I will return and take you to be with me so that where I am you will be too. You know the way to the place I'm going."

Thomas asked, "Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you have really known me, you will also know the Father. From now on you know him and have seen him."

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father; that will be enough for us."

Jesus replied, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been with you all this time? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I have spoken to you I don't speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me does his works. Trust me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or at least believe on account of the works themselves. I assure you that whoever believes in me will do the works that

I do. They will do even greater works than these because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father can be glorified in the Son. When you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.