

## Finding Your Home

1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43  
John 6:60-69

August 26, 2018  
Faith Community

Henri Nouwen was a dedicated Roman Catholic priest and a wonderful author. You'd do well to read anything you can find that was written by him. A native of the Netherlands he spent many years in this country but on occasion would return home. One of those visits included celebrating New Year's Day Mass with a family that had been life long friends.

"All of them are good, caring, and responsible people. Their friendship means a lot to me and gives me joy. Still, I feel a real sadness that the faith that gives so much life to the parents no longer does that for the children and grandchildren."<sup>1</sup>

Father Nouwen wondered how a nation of such strong faith could become so secular in just one generation. He felt their "captivating prosperity was one of the big reasons....The Dutch have become a distracted people - very good, kind and good natured but caught in too much of everything."<sup>2</sup> Good things were crowding out the best, and it broke his heart to see it.

Anyone who feels passionately about what he/she believes can identify with Father Nouwen, maybe even some of you. Friends, this is bedrock, foundational stuff. It's life itself.

King Solomon knew that. He saw to it that the temple was built. It took 7 1/2 years, was one of the great achievements of his life, and was critically important for the nation.

Throughout history people have needed meeting places, and some of the earliest ones were temples or shrines. When the Children of Israel were on the move during the exodus, their center of worship moved right along with them. It was called the Tabernacle or Tent of Meeting. God lived among his people and was consulted there. Nothing major was done without God's say so, and it happened in the Tabernacle.

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<sup>1</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey (New York, Doubleday, 1988), p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> Nouwen, p. 108.

Today's Old Testament passage describes part of King Solomon's prayer when the permanent temple was dedicated.

This was a monumental event for Israel. It would be their headquarters, their gathering point, and the symbol of their unity. God could be praised anywhere, of course, but the temple was the heart of it all. God lived among his people, and they only had to look at the temple to be reminded of it.

Solomon was thrilled. His prayer was filled with astonishment, delight, and praise. He stood before the altar in front of the people, spread his hands upwards, then he knelt and offered his prayer.

***O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below.*** (1 Kings 8:23)

Learn to pray like that, friends. Learn to praise God simply for who God is. Bring your requests to God, absolutely, bring what you're grateful for, yes, but be sure you take time just to be with God, enjoying God's company, praising God for himself.

Listen to what Solomon praises God for here. In the process you can bet his own life was strengthened, and yours will be too when you pray like this.

- God is faithful. He keeps his promises.
- No place is big enough to hold him; heaven itself can't do it.
- God certainly can't be contained by the temple that was being dedicated.
- But with all that glory, God most certainly will hear and answer the prayers of God's people, and the temple would remind them of that.

God is that awesome. But God is that personal too. The God who created all that is is deeply in love with you and can change your life. Have you discovered that yet?

The temple symbolized all of that, and Jesus Christ makes it real today. There's not much we can be sure of these days, but you can take that to the bank. This place exists to remind us of that, that life is lived most authentically when it's a response to God's love and faithfulness.

All that we work so hard to accumulate can be lost in a second.

Reputations come and go.

Sophisticated airplanes can be done in by a piece of metal that blows a tire, and just like that human life is over.

Or as Isaiah put it,

***The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.*** (40:8)

Build your life on that and on nothing less than that.

It's why Solomon was so passionate. It's why Father Nouwen's heart was broken when he saw what had come of his homeland as his people settled for less than the best in their lives. It's why I'm here. I think it's why you're here.

In our New Testament lesson some people who'd been close to Christ turned away. They shared the vision at first, they heard his teaching and had even seen the miracles, but they still walked away. How could such a thing happen? In the midst of it, Christ looked at his twelve disciples and asked about them, will they go too, and Peter offers one of the most wonderful affirmations in all of Scripture:

***Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.*** (John 6:68-9)

That's what I want you to know. I want you to build your life on that foundation. What it all comes down to is that nothing else is worthy of your life, and in reality that's such good news. It really is that simple.

***Whom have I in heaven but you? prays the Psalmist. And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*** (Ps. 73:25-6)

I want that to be your prayer too.

Your part is to decide. You need to choose. The options before you are endless. But I can tell you this: since Jesus Christ is Lord of my life, the church is my home.

- We make promises here.
- We hold each other accountable for keeping them, and for maintaining healthy lifestyles here.
- Milestones of life are recognized here.
- Relationships are rich and real.

- Daily life is shaped and molded.

So I can tell you:

- It does matter that you're here.
- There is a place for you.
- You can make a difference.

Some people looked at what a godly lifestyle was about and then walked away. Others looked at the same thing and signed on for all they were worth. Those people never regretted it. I never have. Neither will you.

Welcome home.