

**Living on the Resurrection Side of Life:
“Resurrected Place”
John 14:1-4**

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Swiss psychiatrist Paul Tournier opens one of his most popular books with these words. “Basically we are always looking for a place—for somewhere to be.” I think the good doctor is right. From the first breath of birth to the final breath of death we are in need of a place, a place to be.

Maybe that’s why John 14 is such a beloved passage of the Bible. *“Let not your hearts be troubled. In my Father’s house are many rooms. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”* Jesus is providing a place for you, a place to be.

WHEN I THINK ABOUT A PLACE TO BE, I THINK ABOUT FAMILY.

God made families so we could have a place to be. That’s why healthy families are so essential to society. We need a place to get our basic needs met, a place to love and be loved, a place to nurture and to be nurtured. That’s what families are for.

Henri Nouwen says we are people who have an address but are seldom home. We have houses, some of them quite elaborate, but do we have homes, places of safety, centers of love, and communities of acceptance?

There are many side effects of cancer that I could do without – the awful weakness, nausea, and pain I abhor. But I must say that cancer has brought some blessings too. It has brought me spiritual intimacy with my wife that I never thought possible. After all these years of marriage, we are discovering each other in new and fresh ways. It is a blessing in light of the struggle of it all.

Robert Frost says “Home is a place where when you go there, they have to take you in.” The Bible says home is a place where when you go there, they want to take you in. So the father of the prodigal runs down the road to greet his wayward son. Shouting with each step, “Welcome home, my child, come on in; welcome, my son, it’s good to see you again.” We need places like that.

While our oldest son, Wes, was working in Florida, we moved from Lexington to Louisville to take on a new pastorate. We consulted him about the move, but in fine, late-adolescent form he informed us that he no longer lived in our house. He was out on his own. So, we could do whatever we wished. All was well until we got a 6 page letter about a week later. It was one, long sob from a lonely son who suddenly realized his place to be had been replaced. Even though his bedroom was still intact, he hadn’t even seen the new house. It was all foreign to him. He had lost his place, his place to be.

WHEN I THINK ABOUT A PLACE TO BE, I THINK ABOUT CHURCH.

God made the Church for us to have a place, a place to be. Ultimately, church is not about buildings, denominations, pastors, customs, and traditions. Church is about people. The Church is a community of faith. It is a safe place where people can love and be loved and form a vital life-long relationship with God.

Parents of confirmands, let me say thank you. It has not always been easy to keep the vows you made at their baptism. Keeping sons and daughters under the ministry and guidance of the Church requires determination and dedication. So many things pull for our attention. But you have hung in there. You have kept the vows and your children today fly on new wings of faith thanks to you.

Confirmands, let me say the Church needs you. The church needs your prayers, presence, gifts, and service. The Church needs your undivided devotion. I was eleven-years-old when I first considered the ministry as a life vocation. Some of you need to think about that too. You can help create a place where other people can find acceptance and a close relationship with God. The Church needs you.

Furthermore, it is our conviction that every Christian is a minister. Whether or not you carry the title, you are a minister too. People need your help, your support, and your love; that's what the Church is all about.

You need the Church. Every child needs two fathers, an earthly one and a heavenly One. We need a host of sisters, brothers, friends, and peers, who will stick with us when the road is difficult. We need wings with which to fly. But we always need safe landing places too. I've always been grateful that my children had a place to go when being home became difficult.

Whether young or old, married or single, rich or poor, strong or weak, leader or follower, the Church is of God and offers you a community of faith. So, people of every age and stage of life need what the Church alone can provide—a place to be.

WHEN I THINK OF A PLACE TO BE, I THINK OF MY HEAVENLY HOME.

“I go to prepare a place for you.”

The place prepared by Jesus has plenty of room. There are many abiding places. A WELCOME mat is at the front door. There is nothing about heaven that suggests narrow, limited, access. It's big enough to receive all who've gone before us and all who are yet to come.

Here we hang “NO VACANCY” signs on our motels; in heaven the sign reads “EVERYONE WELCOME.” Let there be no anxiety about your place in glory. God has a place for you.

When you have company at your house, you like a little time to get ready for their coming. You fix things up a bit, plan some meals, and make some plans. That's what Jesus says to his disciples, troubled as they are. I need to get things ready for your coming. I go to prepare a place for you.

The Place prepared is beaming with relationships. The true beauty of heaven does not lie in the building materials, the chandeliers, the 20 rooms and 10 bath houses with driveways of pearl and streets of gold. Some of you live in that kind of luxury now.

What makes heaven, heaven, is that friends will be there we have loved long ago, peace like a river around us will flow. We will be in the presence of God and the company of one another. Separations will be ended. Pain will disappear.

The Place prepared is in the presence of Jesus. *“That where I am, there you shall be also.”* Not long ago, Barbara Walters, did a documentary on heaven. She says it is the most interesting documentary she has ever done. “I think there is a great need and a great soul-searching in this country,” says Barbara. People want to know about life after death.

Barbara herself is not a believer. She says she has no idea if she expects to go to heaven. Nevertheless, she concludes her interview with these words. “If you can believe that when you die you go to a better place, it certainly makes life more comfortable on earth.”

Jesus is preparing a place for you, a place to be, a place to be here in this world of responsibility and concerns, a place over there where we shall be in the presence of the Lord forever. Claim your place in the Kingdom of God. It has been prepared for you.