

Revelation For Today: Welcoming God Into Our Homes
Revelation 21:1-8

May 9, 2004
Dr. J. Howard Olds

A Sunday School teacher asked her students where God lived. After the usual answers of heaven and in my heart, Bobby spoke up and said, "God lives in the bathroom at our house!" "Why the bathroom?" inquired the teacher. "I don't know," replied Bobby. "I only know that my Dad gets up every morning and beats on the bathroom door where my sister is taking forever to get ready for school and exclaims, 'My God, are you still in there?'" God lives in the bathroom at our house."

Where does God live at your house? Is He on the front porch looking in or locked in the bathroom trying to get out? As the Apostle John surveyed the glory of heaven and the conflicts of earth in the Book of Revelation, he makes this astounding discovery. *"The dwelling of God is with people!"* Eugene Peterson puts it this way: "Look, look, God has moved into the neighborhood, making His home with men and women. They're His people. He's their God. He'll wipe every tear from their eyes.... and make everything new." Where is God dwelling at your house? On this Mother's Day, let's take a closer look.

WHERE GOD LIVES, LOVE ABIDES.

Jim Moore tells the story about being present when a middle-age son flew home to visit his elderly, dying mother in the hospital. He walked over to the bedside of his aged mother, leaned over and kissed her on the cheek. Then touched by that tender moment of seeing her so weak and vulnerable he said, "Mom, you have been such a good mother to me and I want you to know that I love you." Through her tears she replied, "Son, that's the first time you've ever told me. Last Friday was your 63rd birthday, and that's the first time you ever told me that you loved me." Is love spoken at your house? Do you find it easy to say, "I'm sorry" or "Please forgive me?"

We love because God first loved us. *"God is love. Whoever lives in love, lives in God, and God in them."* Telling people to love one another without giving them the power to do it is like asking people to write a check when there are no funds in the bank. It bounces every time.

Do you long to be more loving? Then take your place as a loved child of God. He loves you with an everlasting love. Do you want to learn to forgive? Consider God's forgiveness of you. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

Are you finding it hard to put others first? Think of the way Christ has put you first. He came not to be served, but to serve. Let God help you do what you cannot do on your own.

Of course love is an action verb even more than a stately noun. A group of kids were asked, "What is love?" Here is what they said:

- When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore, so my grandfather does it for her all the time even when his hands got arthritis. That is love.
- When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You know that your name is safe in their mouth.
- Love is when somebody hurts you and you get so mad, but you don't yell at them because you know it would only make matters worse.
- Love is when Mommy sees Daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he's more handsome than Robert Redford.
- You really shouldn't say, "I love you" unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.

So the principle is as old as Moses. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as you love yourself. C.S. Lewis said, "When I have learned to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now." Put God first.

It would be a happy day in most families if we started treating our families as well as we treat our neighbors. Neighborliness begins at home. Unloved people have a very hard time loving. Let God first love you, then you will be empowered to love others.

WHERE GOD LIVES, COMFORT COMES.

"And he will wipe every tear from their eyes."

When I was sick, the Wednesday Morning Bible Study made a quilt for me. It is covered with scriptures and Christian symbols to give me hope in the midst of pain. There were days last winter when I would curl up in the *comforter* and think about an old song my mother used to sing.

*The Comforter has come, the Comforter has come
The Holy Ghost of heaven, the Father's promise given
O, spread the tidings round, wherever man is found
The Comforter has come.*

When I think of God moving over the waters of creation, I call the Creator my Heavenly Father. When I think that God, His Son not sparing, sent Him to die, I think of Christ as my brother. When I consider God to be omnipresent, everywhere, the One who comforts every hurt, the One who is present in every need. I think of the Holy Spirit as my spiritual Mother. The Comforter has come.

- Like a good mother, God leads his dear children along

- Like a good mother, God cares for His own
- Like a good mother, God will never leave us nor forsake us

Evelyn Husband lost her husband Rick when the space shuttle Columbia exploded into pieces upon re-entry to the earth's atmosphere. Evelyn said "As I stood there in shock with my son Matthew, seven, and my daughter Laura, twelve, deep inside I knew God was going to walk me through this somehow. I knew it because He had walked me through other crises earlier in my life."

To live is to let go. Sometimes life asks us to let go of a lot. A job is lost and family income is drastically reduced. Illness strikes and the whole matrix of family life is rearranged. Death comes; all that has been nailed down for so long is now breaking loose.

We raised two boys at our house. They were both high school football players. They consumed gallons of milk and juice a day, not to mention the tons of food. When the last one went away to college, a gallon of milk spoiled in the refrigerator. As Sandy was pouring the spoiled milk down the drain the tears were flowing right along with it. A new era of life had arrived.

With apologies to Ann Murray:

*"I cried a tear, God wiped it dry. Someone died, God knew the whys.
I was confused, God cleared my mind. I sold my soul,
God bought it back for me and gave me dignity.
God gives me strength to stand alone again.
To face the world out on my own again.
He turned my life back into truth again.
He even calls me friend. I needed Him, oh, yes, I needed Him."*

WHERE GOD LIVES, RENEWAL HAPPENS.

In Verse 5 we read, "*I am making everything new.*" **New** is one of my favorite words in the Bible. John says, "*I saw a new heaven, a new earth, a new Jerusalem.*" We read from the New Testament. We sing a new song. We can have a new birth, a new spirit, a new life. From Genesis to Revelation God is at work making all things new. What part of **new** don't you understand?

A high school girl went to a religious gathering at her school and found Christ. She had not been raised in the church, and had no idea how to express her newfound faith to her family, so she decided to live it instead of announce it. A spoiled, selfish, irritable teenager started being kind to her parents. Her attitude changed. She even cleaned up her room. Finally her parents asked, "What has happened to you? You are different." She replied, "I have become a Christian. I am trying to do what Jesus would do." Her parents responded, "If Christ can do that for you, we want to know more." Paul teaches us that, if any one is in Christ they are a new creation. The old is gone and the new has come. Christ is making all things new.

In a matter of a few months, Sandy and I will celebrate our 40th wedding anniversary. When I think back on two immature teenagers, barely out of high school, who started this journey together doing almost everything wrong that could be done wrong in a marriage, there are only a few words that can describe the survival of this relationship-“By the grace of God.”

- By the grace of God, we had to grow up after we married
- By the grace of God, we had to deal with childhood hurts that threatened our relationship
- By the grace of God, we parented sons when we knew little, if anything, about parenting
- By the grace of God, we made a commitment to hang on when things were hard
- By the grace of God, we have persevered, endured, and been born anew. Today we rejoice in the hope that is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord.

God is in the renewal business. God is a change agent. God wants to make all things new. So many people say, “You made your bed, now lie in it.” God says, “Rise from your poorly made beds and receive new life.”

What happens at your house is more important than what happens at the White House. You are the real Secretaries of Defense and keepers of the peace. In the routines of managing a household and making a living, you are shaping society for generations to come. So let God be your guide.

May His love abide in your home. May His comfort come to your soul. May He create in you a new heart and a steadfast spirit that His kingdom may come on earth as it is in heaven.

*Into our homes, into our homes, come into our homes, Lord Jesus,
Come in today, come in to stay. Come into our homes, Lord Jesus.*

Amen.