Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete” (John 15:11).

Acts 15:7-21; Jn 15:9-11

In todays reading from Acts, Peter graciously accedes to the insights of the church’s first great missionaries, Paul and Barnabas. They witness to the activity of the Spirit of Jesus among the Gentiles. They are to be welcomed into the community of faith because the Spirit has already opened the door. There is room in God’s love for everyone who is called to faith in Jesus. A great homecoming will be the culmination of the Gospel of Mercy.

At the Last Supper, Jesus tells his own inner circle of Apostles to remain in his love. It is an ever-expanding embrace that will pass through them to the whole world. Let no rules or limits or artificial barriers keep anyone outside the circle of divine love Jesus came to reveal. How many great preachers and reformers in the history of the church have felt this deep impulse welling up in them as they shared the Scriptures? God wants everyone to make the journey home.

We might admit that popular culture, especially music, has often conveyed universal truths far better than religion, which tends to spiritualize or moralize things to define its exclusive role. Composer and master storyteller Randy Newman has moved more hearts than many preachers with his music and lyrics for the “Toy Story” animations. His other CD collections are brilliant probes into American attitudes toward money, race, sex and violence. For love songs, there are few to equal Newman’s “Feels Like Home,” which explores the deepest of all human fears, of finding ourselves alone

when threatened by life’s dangers and uncertainties.

The song is best performed by Bonnie Raitt and its opening verses might have been the first disciples’ response to Jesus in John’s last discourses. He reassures them that if they love one another, he will always be with them. Dorothy Day’s favorite quote from Dostoevsky and the title of her autobiography also lays down the theme: “We have all known the long loneliness. We know that the answer is love, love in community.”

Raitt makes both the long loneliness and the longing to find love sing. It is a simple love song, but it tells the oldest story of all, the search for love and coming home.

Something in your eyes makes me want to lose myself,

makes me want to lose myself in your heart.

Something in your voice makes my heart beat fast,

hope this feeling will last the rest of my life.

If you knew how lonely my life has been,

and how low I've felt for so long;

If you knew I wanted someone to come along

and change my world the way you've done.

It feels like home, feels like home to me . . .

The entire message of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection is that love is the answer. Jesus offers himself and his way of being human as our true home, where we find safety, integrity and peace. It is also the place that prepares us to go out and find others searching for love, exhausted and exploited by empty promises and heartless degradation.

What Jesus offers is a dwelling place with him no threat can invade or destroy. To know him is to find the way home, to who we really are, have always been, and are becoming. “Remain in my love” he tells them. Seek my face and your place within my heart, and it will bring you “back to where you belong."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFneklGez0s

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