

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 3:10-23

TOPIC: God's presence is within people because of the relational foundation set in Christ.

SUBJECT: God's home is within everything God's created, and human's home is where God is.

TITLE: The Home Within

A week or so ago, I was visiting with Marvin Anderson, who was my primary Town and Country professor when I was in my master's program. Marvin and I connected because of he was born just 10 miles down the road from where I was called into the ministry.

Marvin is one of my go-to people. I consider him a close friend and a mentor, and one of those you'd find in my healing place. When we were visiting, he said something to me that really stopped me in my tracks. He said, "Mark, find the joy." When he said that, I couldn't help but think of this clip from the movie *The Bucket List*.

SHOW CLIP

In this clip, Carter, played by Morgan Freeman, has written a goodbye letter asking Edward, played by Jack Nicholson, his friend, to find the joy in his life, so the waters of life can take him home. In the scene Edward makes amends with his daughter and meets his granddaughter, so he can cross off one item from the bucket list: to kiss the most beautiful girl in the world.

For me, the key concept in finding joy is how the waters of joy lead people home. For me, when joy takes you home, home isn't somewhere else; home is within, and home within finds expression outside of us as followers of Christ, just as Jesus said in John 17.

In 1 Corinthians 3, the Apostle Paul tells the church at Corinth to focus on the home within. The home within can occur in individuals, but often the home within is found within a community because communities bring focus to the home within to bear. Focusing on the home within means people must center their lives on God's wisdom, grace, healing presence,

mercy, and justice, since God is at home within all God has created, and – as Jesus says in our gospel reading – the home within is particularly relevant when we are doing what Julianne of Norwich referred to as “oneing with God.” The home within is a place God dwells within us, so our task is letting the hope that’s there emanate from it.

This “temple of God” Paul writes about is the community as a whole. Here Paul is using a “plural” term, proclaiming “All y’all are God’s temple and God’s Spirit dwells in all y’all.” In this instance, “all y’all” isn’t just folks in the church; it includes the folks hope is shared with in the community. In other words, the home within makes each of us hope bearers. *Since the church community is plural rather than singular, the plural means the people who make up the body of Christ (not a building) are to step into the mission field, where Christ can be encountered, and give attention to the home within everyone where God dwells so, the temple-church does Christ’s work in the world.*

The other day, First Church hosted a National Association for Mental Illness “standing in the gap” workshop to address mental illness issues in north central Kansas. There were people from all different kinds of backgrounds there: social workers, people from the pharmaceutical industry, state employees, pastors, church workers, and so forth.

As we were listening to the variety of presentations, I realized something I hadn’t realized until then. Churches often miss opportunities to be a Samaritan to others in need around us, and in the end, churches are left with regret, and those living in poverty who often have mental illness and addictions, are often left feeling hopeless. When people ignore people who often need hope, the hopelessness and despair become overwhelming. One of the reasons

this happens, I think, is because poverty often has a direct link with domestic violence, health care, addiction, mental illness, and housing, economic and food insecurities to mention a few.

One of the reasons for this, I think, is because people tend to separate these categories from one another. It's like if I said we should separate differences with our own persons into mental health, emotional health, physical health, nutritional health, and so forth when each of these areas of health all impact each and every person the same way. As John Donne once said, none of us "is an island". The same is true under the umbrella I'll describe as poverty. And even poverty, itself, can be split into its own separate categories.

Both of our passages today suggest hope is found in community rather than separation, and that often means dealing with uncomfortable things. Finding the home within takes hard work for some people, especially when they've fallen into despair and hopelessness. When hope becomes tenuous, the last thing anyone needs is someone else's judgment. What folks struggling to hope often need is a non-judgmental companion to walk alongside them, to coach and teach and befriend them, being a source of support as the home within is re-discovered.

In 1 Corinthians 3, the Apostle Paul suggests that people should never find themselves separated from one another, so the home we have within can be a source of nurture to those looking or separated from the home within. As followers of Christ, and as nurturers of the home within, our task is to nurture the home within ourselves and the home that exists within others, so God's children are as strong and healthy as they possibly can be.

The home within is maintained through a healthy relationship with God, so the home within is life giving. When everyone works together for the sake of the health of the community, the home within becomes healthier to the point it manifests a life-giving ministry.

When the home within guides followers, as Paul suggests, it isn't just a home within we create within ourselves or create just for those here. The home within is something we help build with everyone, everywhere, always.

The home within is something of a mystery, but it makes us one with God. Sometimes when people don't understand that poverty can lead to addiction(s), insecurities, and compromised mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health, it's because it's time to reconnect with the home within, where God resides, and people need help doing that. I know there have been times I needed help, just like Edward in *The Bucket List*.

As Morgan Freeman's voiceover suggests, it's time for the church to stop regretting what hasn't been done, so the church gets back to seeing the need around it, so as part of the community, people get back to hitting the sweetest notes. Right now, the church has become a stranger to those who have left. I think folks have left the church because the church became a stranger rather than a spouse to those looking for hope. It's time to return to the home within and display for others they can, too, and that we will walk with them however long it takes for their recovery and ours.

As Carter tells Edward in his goodbye letter, "our lives are streams flowing toward" and I would add thoses to the presence of God within. When we find the joy – just as my mentor and friend suggested to me – we can close our eyes, and the waters of our baptism will take us home.

In the name of the triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – one God in perfect community. Amen.