

May 2, 2021, the Fifth Sunday of Easter (Year B)
Abode-ing

1 John 4:7-21

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. ¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. ¹⁵God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. ¹⁷Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. ¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God

Nomad Land is a worthwhile story about the roots of the supposedly rootless. For most of human experience people weren't settled down villagers farming the land. Folding our tents and disappearing into the night was pretty common. They traveled, but they didn't travel alone. It brings up the question of our place in this world. Our predecessors didn't belong to nations; weren't from a city, and had no place to call home. What they had instead was a people to call home. Their place was among the tribe or the family band. So the nomadic phenomenon among the campers and rovers that travel the land is nothing new; it's a throwback to what we once were.

The early conflicts recounted in the book of Exodus are a universal story of what happens when the nomadic herder meets the farmer. Most of the time such history is written by the settled farmers, but our Bible starts with the point of view of nomads

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before they settled down. Some have said that agriculture did not improve the human condition. It certainly increased the human population such that our world would not sustain 7 billion of us if we were still hunter gatherers. Eating meat may become a thing of the past for future generations.

Once they settled down and became the nation of Israel the Hebrew people grew accustomed to the place. They had worship centers and eventually a temple in Jerusalem a sort of holy motel where God stayed when visiting the earth. Then disaster struck in the form of an Iraqi invasion – they've been at this sort of thing for several thousand years so I'm pretty sure we aren't going to fix it. God's house was knocked down and all the familiar places were turned to rubble. Many of the survivors were carried off to a foreign land. There the idea of a place started to transform once again. Remember place used to be the people you were with. Then it became a piece of real estate. Now it became the pages of a book. Our Bible goes into bewildering detail about the construction, contents, and architecture of the Jerusalem temple. It creates a sort of three dimensional picture of a place that is no more yet is just inside the front cover.

The temple, however, is nothing without the presence of God. The Bible forms an introduction to the one who dwells within the temple it describes. How it became the dwelling place of the Children of Israel is fascinating history, but you nomads gathered here join them in this place. We dwell as our ancestors in a people. We dwell as our predecessors in a place. Our abode, however, is in God and God lives in us. In an ever changing world, living lives that often move us about, our dwelling place remains the same. What does it mean to live in love and have love live in us?

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Sometimes it's difficult when the world refuses to live where we live to stay in this place. So much calls us to live elsewhere and differently, to identify ourselves as coming from somewhere that love does not dwell. The world can be bitter and cold without an offer of a place to lay your head. Many homeless people know this is not just a metaphor but their daily experience. When we are at home with one another as Christians we are a home.

Do you live in church? If anyone asks you what your address is think for a second, I live in love and love lives in me. It might be harder to get mail delivered there than here in Shawnee, but it is our place as much as the homes we all go to following this service. In Psalm 90 it says "LORD, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."

Closing Prayer: We behold your glory, O God, in the love shown by your Son, lifted up on the cross and exalted on high. Be glorified anew in the love we have for one another as disciples of the risen Lord Jesus, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.