

“Going Home”
Luke 8:26-39
Rev. David Hutchinson
Sunday, June 16, 2019

William Fisher wrote the words to the famous song “Going Home” in 1922.

They were written for a part of the New World Symphony by Dvorak.

The symphony was composed in 1893 while Dvorak was living in America.

He was far from his home in Bohemia, a part of the Czech lands.

The Largo section of the symphony has an English horn solo that captures something of his longing to return home, and leave America behind. / But Dvorak only expressed his longing in MUSIC. / The WORDS came 30 years later. / But the words are a perfect verbal expression of that non-verbal musical feeling. / Fisher - - who wrote the words - - knew Dvorak. / And I think it’s pretty clear that he also UNDERSTOOD him. / How else could the words fit the music so well.

But - - there’s more to these words than that.

They also express the longings of OTHER people - - not just this one composer.

Fisher wrote THIS - - in 1922 about the words:

“The English horn solo is the outpouring of Dvorak’s own home-longing - - with something of the loneliness of far-off prairie horizons - - and the faint memory of the Native American’s bygone days - - and a sense of tragedy of the Black-man as he sings in his spirituals. / Deeper still it is a moving expression of that - - “nostalgia of the soul” - - that all humans feel.”

Then he says this about - - how the words - - emerge from the music:

“That - - the lyric opening theme of the Largo - - should spontaneously suggest the words “Goin’ home, goin’ home is natural enough - BUT - the lines that follow the melody - take the form - a negro spiritual accords with the GENESIS of the symphony”

So - while some have claimed the words are “based on a spiritual” - - they are not.

They are a spiritual - - that actually emerged FROM out of a symphony. It’s amazing!

Mostly because people don’t usually associate spirituals and symphony.

But - - maybe - home is where the HEART is?

One of the most famous performances of this song was by Paul Robeson in 1958.

Robeson was that famous African American singer and actor of the 1950s.

He was banned from America because of the communist scare.

And he lived for a time in Europe - - unable to come home to America.

“Goin’ home, goin’ home

I’m just going home

Quiet-like, some still day, I’m just going home.

Mother’s there - - expecting me...

Father’s waiting too...

Lots of folk gathered there.

All the friends I knew.

Nothing’s lost - - all is gain.

No more fret or pain.

No more stumbling on the way.

No more longing for the day.

Real life begun.”

The last thing - - Jesus says - - to the man he healed was: “Go home”

The man - - had - - BEGGED Jesus to let him stay with Jesus.

Probably because people from his home had not treated him well.

But something has changed now for him.

And he goes home - - “in his right mind” - - it says.

His real life - - can begin.

Think about what that would be like.

This man is never named. / Maybe people didn't even KNOW his name.

Maybe they didn't bother to find out. Or they didn't WANT to know.

He lived at a distance from the town .

Bible commentators have called him the “Gerasene Demoniac” because Luke's gospel says that Jesus arrived in the country of the Gerasenes. / And Jesus encountered a man there who was possessed by demons. / So a Demoniac - from Gerasene.

What else are you going to call him - - if you don't know his name?

So they name him - - after his ILLNESS!

Because THAT is the only way they know him: as a sick person.

But the thing is - - he's not EVEN that!

He's NOT from any TOWN of Gerasenes.

He lives WHERE?

The Bible says he lives among the TOMBS.

It's like he's DEAD.

He's certainly dead to most of the town's people.

The WALKING dead.

He is a nobody.

He's not PHYSIOLOGICALLY dead.

His BODY still functions.

But he IS - - socially dead.

Orlando Patterson - - a historian and sociologist from Harvard University - - describes a concept he calls: "social death". / He uses it to describe the experience of slaves - - whose only frame of reference was the institution of slavery. / He says that this experience creates, "the un-doing of personhood".

This experience can also describe the experience of people in prison in solitary confinement.

In both cases - - normal human relationships are - - undone.

Listen to these descriptions of people in solitary confinement, which I've taken from the work of another scholar named Luis Menendez-Antuna - - a New Testament professor.

These are from interviews with people who have been in solitary confinement.

Listen and think of our friend in the Bible who lived among the tombs...

"After 23 days of darkness I came unhinged, no longer able to identify with my own body and voice. I heard someone screaming far away and it was me. I fell against the wall and as if it were a catapult I hurled across the cell."

"Melting, everything in the cell starts moving, you feel you are losing your vision"

"I went to a standstill psychologically. I didn't talk for 15 days. I couldn't hear clearly. I think what I am saying is true - - but not sure. I think I was drooling but I am not sure."

These are the experiences of people - - cut off from relationship.

That - - is what happened to this man - - who lived among the tombs.

He was isolated.

He was alone.

Whatever ELSE he was - - and whatever other problems he had - - and whatever illnesses he may have had - - his ISOLATION - - could not have helped.

But Jesus - - restores him.

AND - - in doing that - - what QUESTION does Jesus ask him?

Jesus asks him - - his NAME.

He doesn't have a normal answer.

Because he's gone insane - - from the isolation.

But nevertheless - - I believe the QUESTION is the beginning of his healing.

What's your name?

Who ARE you?

The question begins to RESTORE - - his personhood.

He's being treated like - - a human being.

It's not far, just close by

Through an open door

Work all done, care laid by

Going to fear no more.

So...

Is there anything you long for?

Have you ever stumbled on life's way?

Do you have any frets - - or pains?

If Jesus - - restored this man from the tombs - - to his right mind...

Don't you think - - Jesus can restore YOU?

Do you know anyone with restless dreams?

Do you know anyone - - who is isolated - - or who feels alone?

Don't you think - - if Jesus restored the man from the tombs...

Maybe - - there's hope - - for the people WE know?

Maybe - - our job - - is to tell them.

Maybe - - we can be the ones - - to bring hope.

Just a little RAY of light - - in the shadows.

Imagine yourself at daybreak...

...the sun light touching your cheeks.

And HEAR Jesus words:

“Go home”

“Go home”

It's all well and good to sit here and think about it.

But let me encourage you today - - to actually try - - to DO it.

What would it mean for you - - to respond to these words of Jesus?

What does this man who was restored - - mean to you?

How can you - - find RESTORATION - - in this?

Restoration - - means a RETURN.

Which means that there WAS a time - - when this man was YOUNG...

There WAS a time - - when he WAS in his right mind.

He was BORN - - a child of God - - like EVERY ONE of US!

We DO know what it's like.

If we can just remember!

If we can just - - receive - - that restoration - - from Jesus.

Picture yourself DOING - - whatever that thing is - - that you HOPE for.

And hear Jesus words:

“Go home”

“Go home”