

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

Text: John 14:1-11

Preacher: The Rev. Lawrence L. Hand

St. Peter's – Lafayette Hill, PA.

April 20, 2008

### “Mobile Homes and RVs”

The Story of the Three Little Pigs: In order to protect themselves from the big bad wolf the 1<sup>st</sup> Pig built a house out of Straw, The second Built a house out of Wooden Sticks, The third built a house out of Bricks! The Big Bad wolf said each time “I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your house down!” The straw house fell easily, the wooden house fell too with a little more difficulty and finally the brick house withstood the big bad wolves bad breath attempt to topple it down. Have you ever wondered how long the 3 pigs stayed huddled in that tiny house? Remember the childhood jingle? “Who’s afraid of the big bad wolf, the big bad wolf the big bad wolf?” Apparently there are many in our world who are still afraid of the big bad wolf and like the 3 Little Pigs are building all kinds of houses that give them a sense of stability, identity and security. Our world is filled with endless attempts at building houses that provide a secure identity in which to live. Have you every noticed how our world is filled with Houses of all shapes and kinds. Think of the Design Houses of the Fashion Industry for instance: For the Hoi-polloi there’s the House of Dior, House of Valentino, House of Versace, House of Givenchy, House of Gucci and Faberge, House of Ralph Lauren and Pierre Cardin for example. And for the more common folks there’s Martha’s world at K-Mart and Michael Graves at Target! Or how about some of the other houses in which life is organized and identified with: Yankee stadium is known as the “House that Ruth Built” or you might have breakfast in the International House of Pancakes or even a country ruled for generations by the House of Windsor! We look to the “House of Representatives” to make laws and guide our country. We might be so sure about something that we would be willing to “Bet the House on it!” And who doesn’t like to hear that the hors’dourves or the drinks are “On the house!”

Whatever the house might be there are endless attempts to convince us to buy into and believe that you can take total control of your life and create your own future. We are sold on the idea that we alone are the directors and producers of our life-style. Fundamentally style is a decision about how we will live. Style is not superficial. It is a philosophical project of the deepest order." It is an “I CHOOSE THEREFORE I AM!” approach to life. The Design houses and self-help movement feed into and feed off of this approach to life. The problem with most design-mavens and self-help gurus is that while the exteriors lifestyle of the house may look great, but the interiors, despite elaborate window-dressing is an empty, hopeless and soulless space. Instead of the style designing a life, the style becomes the life. The turns in the wheel of style and fashion come fast and furious. It’s like running on a treadmill going nowhere.

Some of you might remember the old Alfred Hitchcock show which featured the story of an evil woman jailed for committing a murder. The woman soon realizes that her only chance for escape is to befriend the old man who serves as the prison undertaker. He is the only inmate who is allowed outside the prison walls. After much bribing and begging, the woman finally convinces the old man to help her escape. He tells her that next time she hears the bell toll to

announce a death in the prison; she should slip down to the prison mortuary and hide in the coffin with the dead body. He would take the coffin out the next morning and bury it in a shallow grave. When no one was looking, he would slip back out and dig up the woman and release her. Everything went as planned for the perfect escape. On the night the woman heard the death bell, she slipped down to the mortuary and hid in the waiting coffin with the dead body. The coffin was transported outside the prison walls and buried. The woman waited hopefully, anxiously, but no one came to dig her up. Finally, she decided to light a match and look around her. It was then she discovered that the dead body lying beneath her was that of the old undertaker. The houses of this world promise to transport us out of the prisons of our life and the things that confine us only to leave us just as empty and hopeless!

Jesus knows what it takes to make a “house” a home! The problem for the disciples then and especially the disciples of today-you and me- is not to design our own lifestyle-our own house. The challenge is not to accept life on OUR terms, but to accept life on GOD’S TERMS!!

In our Gospel lesson Jesus has just had the Passover meal with his disciples. He has washed their feet in an act of servant hood. He has foretold his betrayal which Judas will soon perform. He has predicted Peter's denial. He has told them he is leaving. But he adds this word of hope:” Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many rooms. I go to prepare a place for you and will come again and take you to myself. So that where I am, you may be also.” The disciples are being promised a gift of great contentment – a home; a dwelling place in the house of God. The gospel writer chooses his terms carefully, for John wants to make sure his readers know Jesus is not simply offering heavenly rooms for rent. The dwelling or "abiding with" is a spiritual, not a spatial move.

The Father's house is a household, a family – not a building, not a place. It's perhaps surprising that Jesus, who intentionally choose rootless-ness and wandering as marks of his ministry ("foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" – Matthew 8:20, Luke 9:58) Jesus refers to the sense of house and home in order to offer comfort and promise peace to his disciples. But the fact is that while Jesus may have been without a settled space to call his own, he was always at home in the house of his Father. Jesus, as the Living Word of God, was eternally indwelling with his Father ("I am in the Father and the Father is in me" – John 14:11). Jesus was never separated from the Father's spirit, wherever he went he was always home. Jesus may have had no place to lay his head, but his heart and his soul were always at rest in that house. Because the Father's house is Jesus' house, Jesus can boldly offer housing to all his disciples. He promises to prepare a place for them and to return to them as their guide to this heavenly address. Jesus is our eternal contemporary. Jesus invites us to dwell in this home with him right now because Jesus is the home!! “I AM THE WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE!!” The home Jesus is referring to is a MOBILE HOME; AN R-V...A RE-CREATIONAL VEHICLE! The home is our BAPTISM into the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus himself! The address is the sign of the cross on our foreheads! That Mobile home goes wherever our faith journey might take us through all of the celebrations and the sorrows that life will hurl at us! It is an RV a RE-CREATIONAL VEHICLE in which we are forgiven and born anew each and every day... “RE”CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

AND to live a LIFE STYLED and MODELED AFTER the life of Jesus himself! Our Baptism is the sacred space; the room that Jesus has prepared for us to dwell in now and in the perfection of eternal life to come. This is a mobile home; always moving and alive but always at home with God!

From the Second World War comes a true story of a young foot soldier in the heat of battle sought permission from his ranking officer to enter “No Man’s Land” on the battlefield. The young soldier wanted to retrieve his closest buddy who had been grievously wounded. The officer barked back at him, “You can go, but it won’t be worth it. Your friend might already be dead, and you might even lose your own life in the gunfire.” Despite the officer’s warning the young soldier entered “no man’s land” and through the machine-gun and mortar shells he managed to reach his fallen friend. He hoisted him on his shoulders and delivered him back to the officer’s side. While carrying his friend back he was hit with mortar fire; the pain knifing through his side. As they tumbled into the trench the ranking officer shook his head in disgust and growled, “I TOLD YOU IT WASN’T WORTH IT. YOUR FRIEND IS DEAD AND YOU’RE FATALLY WOUNDED!!” Without hesitation the young soldier wincing and gritting his teeth from the pain said to his commanding officer, “IT WAS WORTH IT SIR. WHEN I REACHED MY BUDDIES SIDE HE WAS STILL ALIVE AND HE LOOKED UP AT ME AND SAID, “I KNEW YOU WOULD COME!!”

Let not your hearts be troubled!....In my house are many rooms! I go to prepare a place for you...I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also! Our Lord Jesus has promised to come to us not matter how wounded we might be. Real love like the love of our Lord will never let us down. God has chosen us and redeem us to live in the mobile home and recreational vehicle of his love and forgiveness; always moving and alive but always at home with God! Amen