



# Stories of Home *in* Scripture

## Fall Bible Study Guide

Wednesdays, October 1 – November 19  
6 p.m. in Nativity or on Zoom



Central Lutheran  
MINNEAPOLIS

## Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to a new season of learning and growing together!

A new program year brings a new theme for us to ponder. Throughout the fall we will study “Stories of Home” by casting a broad vision that leads us through the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. We will consider the stories that shape our understanding of home in the early days of God’s people.

As we lean into these stories, there is much for us to consider. As we think about the idea of home or “homing,” who and what are we thinking about? Is it family? Is it geography? Even more interesting is home an external place, an internal feeling, or a combination of both?

In these first eight sessions, the pastors will walk us through the great stories of home in scripture while weaving in spiritual and theological questions about why these stories matter to Christians today. Why were they spoken, written down, and then translated into hundreds of languages over time and around the globe? These are interesting questions, so let’s get started.

Attend Each Week, or When it Works  
In person or via Zoom

As always, these Bible studies are more holy conversations. No previous knowledge is expected, in fact it helps to seek to enter the study as if for the first time; we call this *beginner’s mind*. You are invited to attend in person or via Zoom each week, but the invitation is always open for when it works in your schedule. Remember: always join the conversation, regardless of where you are in your faith journey. For this study, you may want to read the assigned readings ahead of time.

You’ll want a Bible for our shared study of “Stories of Home.” We recommend a good study Bible and any translation you have is fine. A variety of translations enriches our conversations because of the nuances in language. The study texts are listed in the schedule and at the beginning of each lesson. A basic outline of the lesson is included in this booklet, and the pastors will provide additional information and handouts prior to or in class.

Christ Care Prayers begin each lesson; it is a time when we pray for one another and the needs of the world. If you have a prayer concern that you do not want to share in front of the group, you can send a private chat to the pastor who is leading the study.

Thank you for joining this Bible study, these holy conversations.

## Join Online!

You can join the Bible study online via Zoom.

Meeting ID: 818 5800 2506

## Schedule

<b>Wednesday, October 1:</b>	Original Blessing <i>Genesis 1-2 and Psalm 8</i>
<b>Wednesday, October 8:</b>	From Home to Captivity/Exile to Home <i>Isaiah 43:1-7, Ezekiel 37:26-27, and Psalm 126</i>
<b>Wednesday, October 15:</b>	God as Home in Prayer <i>Psalm 84, Psalm 90, and Psalm 139</i>
<b>Wednesday, October 22:</b>	Eternal Home and How It Shapes Now <i>Isaiah 25:6-8, Jeremiah 29:10-14, and Revelation 21:3-4</i>
<b>Wednesday, October 29:</b>	Home for Young Jesus in Luke <i>Luke 1-2</i>
<b>Wednesday, November 5:</b>	Home for Jesus on the Move in Matthew <i>Matthew 4-6</i>
<b>Wednesday, November 12:</b>	Welcoming Jesus Home in Mark <i>Mark 2-3</i>
<b>Wednesday, November 19:</b>	A Homecoming to Change the World in John <i>John 20-21</i>
<b>Wednesday, November 26:</b>	No Class for Thanksgiving

## Original Blessing

Wednesday, October 1, 6 p.m.

Suggested reading: Genesis 1–2 and Psalm 8

### Overview:

In our conversation tonight we will slow down into the first words of scripture to ponder the nuances of original blessing, and we will pay attention to the home we have in God and God with us in all moments of life.

Please see page 13 for more context and a longer mediation from Center for Action and Contemplation.

### Welcome

### Christ Care Prayers

### Weekly Conversations and Reflection

1. What are the elements of Home captured in this story? People, place, ancestors?
2. What does the text tell you about the culture that surrounds the characters?
3. What does the text tell you about the presence of God?
4. How does the story make you feel? Joyful? Curious? Sad? Hopeful?

Closing Poem: “When I Am Among the Trees” (page 13)

### Genesis 1:1-5, 26-27

<sup>1</sup>When God began to create the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup>the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” <sup>27</sup>So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

### From “A Faith of Many Rooms” by Debi Thomas

“In the end, what makes a home truly welcoming is the host who answers the door when we knock, who immediately lifts our weary spirits with a warm smile and a hearty ‘come on in...’ Psalm 23, one of the most familiar psalms in the Bible, describes a God who is an exquisite host. The God of this psalm believes in abundance – we will lack nothing once we enter her house. This God invites us to rest our weary bodies in his fragrant green pastures.”

# From Home to Captivity/Exile to Home

Wednesday, October 8, 6 p.m.

Suggested reading: Isaiah 43:1-7, Ezekiel 37:26-27, and Psalm 126

## Overview:

You may have your story of home-captivity/exile-home. It is the story of our human vulnerability, brokenness, and restoration. It is also a story that can be filled with trauma, so we will go lightly in our conversation tonight.

The loss of home, safety, and security is occasionally a result of our own choices and challenges. More often, the loss of home, safety, and security is because of forces greater than us. Here we tread even more lightly.

For the people of Israel, the Hebrew scriptures can be read as a story of home-captivity/exile and home, with home in-between captivity and exile, and captivity after home and restoration. It is why the Middle East is in such conflict. Land, home, promise, and layers of loss and theological challenge are all here, so we tread lightly in these themes.

For a brief run-down of moments and dates, visit page 13.

## Welcome

## Christ Care Prayers

## Weekly Conversations and Reflection

1. What are the elements of the journey of home/exile/home captured in this story?
2. What does the text tell you about the culture that surrounds the characters?
3. What does the text tell you about the presence of God?
4. How does the story make you feel? Joyful? Curious? Sad? Hopeful?

## Closing Poem: "The Road Not Taken" (page 14)

## Psalm 126

<sup>1</sup>When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. <sup>2</sup>Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." <sup>3</sup>The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. <sup>4</sup>Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses in the Negeb. <sup>5</sup>May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. <sup>6</sup>Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

## Ezekiel 37:26-27

<sup>26</sup>I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will bless them and multiply them and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore. <sup>27</sup>My dwelling place shall be over them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

# God as Home in Prayer

Wednesday, October 15, 6 p.m.

Suggested reading: Psalm 84, Psalm 90, and Psalm 139

## Overview:

There are countless moments in the Hebrew scriptures when people of faith turn to God in prayer. The prayers rise up with a sense of home when all is well and blessings abound. There are prayers of lament that rise up when life feels more like captivity or exile. Home in God and God at home in our lives is grounded in permission to wonder about it all. It is the permission for praise, hope, longing, lament, anger, laughter, and wonder.

This week we will pause to consider a few of the words of prayer that reveal a sense of home. There are three Psalms to consider (of the 150 Psalms) and, in some way, celebrate or yearn for a homing in God. We may also ponder one or two short lessons that reveal a sense of home in God for the Hebrew people. These Psalms are deeply shaped by what we pondered last week in the home-captivity/exile-home movement throughout history.

## Welcome

## Christ Care Prayers

## Weekly Conversations and Reflection

1. What are the elements of Home captured in this week's prayers? How is a home in God in prayer shaped by people, place, ancestors?
2. What does the text tell you about the culture that surrounds the characters?
3. What does the text tell you about the presence of God?
4. How does the story make you feel? Joyful? Curious? Sad? Hopeful?

*From "Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer" by Brother David Steindl-Rast*

*"When I discover that in my heart of hearts God is closer to me than I am to myself, then I have come home."*

# Eternal Home and How It Shapes Now

Wednesday, October 22, 6 p.m.

Suggested reading: Isaiah 25:6-8, Jeremiah 29:10-14, and Revelation 21:3-4

## Overview:

The promise of eternal life, of an eternal home is to be approached with generosity and openness. Our home in God began before we were knit together in our mother's womb, a home that is also a final home for us. How you imagine and ponder the final home in God can shape your sense of home in God now. It may be that this time will be spent pondering our various images of heaven, eternity, and a final home in God. It may be that imagining is what we need in this complex and unsettling time.

Hebrew scriptures are not shaped by a concept of heaven or eternal life as we understand it through the lens of Jesus. Revelation and images like Jesus' teaching in John 14 shape our hopes and dreams. Yet, God's home is with us, Immanuel in Isaiah, and our home with God is shaped by the promise of original blessing. This sense of home is woven into Hebrew scripture.

If we needed to tread lightly into the stories of captivity and exile, we are invited into a gentleness with our pondering of the gift of eternal home in God and how that may shape our sense of home in God right now.

David Whyte, the poet and author, invites us to ponder our vulnerability and how that shapes our life's journey into death. Please see page 14 for a supporting quote from David Whyte.

## Welcome

## Christ Care Prayers

## Weekly Conversations and Reflection

1. What are the elements of Home captured in this story?  
People, place, ancestors?
2. What does the text tell you about the culture that surrounds the characters?
3. What does the text tell you about the presence of God?
4. How does the story make you feel? Joyful? Curious? Sad? Hopeful?

Closing Poem: "In Blackwater Woods" (page 14)

## Job 19:23-27

*"<sup>23</sup>O that my words were written down! O that they were inscribed in a book! <sup>24</sup>O that with an iron pen and with lead they were engraved on a rock forever! <sup>25</sup>For I know that my redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth; <sup>26</sup>and after my skin has been destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, <sup>27</sup>whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!*

## Revelation 21:3-4

*<sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God will be with them and be their God; <sup>4</sup>God will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."*

# Home for Young Jesus

Wednesday, October 29, 6 p.m.

Suggested reading: Luke Chspters 1–2

## Overview:

We turn to the New Testament this week. For this portion of our Stories of Home study, we will focus on the four Gospels. We note the nuances between the Synoptic Gospels and John and we'll dwell deeply in the images and emotions of our physical home and our emotional and spiritual home.

It is interesting for us to note that Jesus was born in Bethlehem because of the census. The Gospels name that Jesus was from Nazareth, but he was not born there and, while Luke says that Jesus and his family returned to Galilee, Matthew tells a different story. Matthew's Gospel says that Jesus and family left Bethlehem and traveled to Egypt the threat of King Herod had passed. We also hear very little about Jesus' young life. Other than the story where Jesus is lost in the temple, we know almost nothing about his childhood.

We can, however, make inferences about his childhood knowing that he was raised by Jewish parents in a Jewish community. We can also draw some conclusions about Jesus' sense of home because of his identity as both the son of Mary and Joseph and the son of God.

## Welcome

## Christ Care Prayers

## Weekly Conversations and Reflection

1. What are the elements of Home captured in this story? People, place, ancestors?
2. What does the text tell you about the culture that surrounds the characters?
3. What does the text tell you about the presence of God?
4. How does the story make you feel? Joyful? Curious? Sad? Hopeful?

### **Luke 2:6-7**

*<sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.*

*<sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.*

# Home for Jesus on the Move

Wednesday, November 5, 6 p.m.

Suggested reading: Matthew Chapters 4–6

## Overview:

In this section of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus has been baptized by John and has experienced 40 days of temptation in the wilderness. Jesus wilderness experience is an interesting interlude that separates his time in Nazareth from his time in ministry in Galilee and beyond. We are told that Capernaum becomes his home but the stories that follow, in all the Gospels, suggest that Jesus was nomadic and travelled from place to place with his disciples.

Matthew tells us that Jesus "went throughout Galilee...and great crowds followed him from Galilee to the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan." As you consider all the stories of Jesus and the reality that he was always on the move, what might you imagine Jesus would describe as home? It's an interesting question as we ponder whether home is about place, people, culture, and spirit.

## Welcome

## Christ Care Prayers

## Weekly Conversations and Reflection

1. What are the elements of Home captured in this story? People, place, ancestors?
2. What does the text tell you about the culture that surrounds the characters?
3. What does the text tell you about the presence of God?
4. How does the story make you feel? Joyful? Curious? Sad? Hopeful?

## **Matthew 4:12-14**

<sup>12</sup> Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. <sup>13</sup> He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, <sup>14</sup> so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

# Welcoming Jesus Home

Wednesday, November 12, 6 p.m.

Suggested reading: Mark Chapters 2–3

## Overview:

In this story, Jesus visits Levi's home and eats with a number of guests who the religious authorities believe to be sinners. What's interesting about this story is the understanding that if you are invited into one's home, there is an assumption of deep relationship and connection. The same is true in the story of Zacchaeus in Luke's Gospel. When Jesus notices Zacchaeus in the tree straining to see him go by, Jesus invites himself for lunch, establishing a relationship that brought about transformation.

There is an intimacy in the invitation to someone's home. We hear the stories again and again in Scripture of invitation to be together, to be welcomed, seen, heard, and affirmed. They are powerful stories.

## Welcome

## Christ Care Prayers

## Weekly Conversations and Reflection

1. What are the elements of Home captured in this story?  
People, place, ancestors?
2. What does the text tell you about the culture that surrounds the characters?
3. What does the text tell you about the presence of God?
4. How does the story make you feel? Joyful? Curious? Sad? Hopeful?

## Mark 2:15-16

<sup>15</sup> And as he [Jesus] sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. <sup>16</sup> When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

# A Homecoming to Change the World

Wednesday, November 19, 6 p.m.

Suggested reading: John Chapters 20–21

## Overview:

Of the many post resurrection stories of Jesus, this is the one that sparks our imaginations for the shared experience of Jesus homecoming for the disciples. As they hid in fear after Jesus' crucifixion, imagine what it must have felt like for the disciples to see Jesus appear inside their home. The details included in this great story invite us into the mystery and absurdity of it all. The locked door, the peace of Christ, and the giving of the Holy Spirit all inspire the disciples to imagine their futures in a completely new way.

This story sets the church in motion from inside a house where Jesus' followers gathered expecting to mourn. And instead, because of Jesus' appearance and presence, their lives were forever changed to become the people who would bring the good news of Jesus to the whole world. It is a story of a homecoming that would change the world forever.

## Welcome

## Christ Care Prayers

## Weekly Conversations and Reflection

1. What are the elements of Home captured in this story? People, place, ancestors?
2. What does the text tell you about the culture that surrounds the characters?
3. What does the text tell you about the presence of God?
4. How does the story make you feel? Joyful? Curious? Sad? Hopeful?

## John 20:19-20

<sup>19</sup>When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

## Final Note

Thank you for exploring these Stories of Home with us. Perhaps two readings can help us close this conversation, for now. First from one of your pastors' favorite authors:

"In the end, what makes a home truly welcoming is the host who answers the door when we knock, who immediately lifts our weary spirits with a warm smile and a hearty 'come on in...' Psalm 23, one of the most familiar psalms in the Bible, describes a God who is an exquisite host. The God of this psalm believes in abundance – we will lack nothing once we enter her house. This God invites us to rest our weary bodies in his fragrant green pastures."

-Debi Thomas, *A Faith of Many Rooms*

Next, a passage from Gerhard Frost, a Lutheran contemplative in that time of the late 1960s when there were flourishing denominations and cultural unrest.

"We nourish each other whenever we gather to tell and retell the story as we find it in the scriptures and experience it in the daily goodness of God. We help and shape one another when we come together in the common circle around the fire of God's love. Too often in our Christian witness, we have depended on argument to get our point across. We turn the church into a debating society and let ourselves become too preoccupied with proofs. We forget resistance thrives in an adversary situation; there are always a thousand defenses against our argument, no matter how forceful we are. But who can resist the warmth and power of the story well told? One generation shall laud thy works to another...."

The human family strengthens as its members permit their personal histories to be woven into the tapestry of one great story. We add to it every day as we experience God's presence, receive God's gifts, and pass on what we have learned to one another.

God offers himself to us; we, in turn, share what we receive from him. This is the meaning of the Christian story. In a graceful cycle of faith, we move from God to each other and back to God again. Our movement is both personal and communal. It binds together the past and future, and through it we come together in the presence of the Father, Son and the Spirit."

-Gerhard Frost, *Homing in the Presence*

## Supporting Readings

### “Original Blessing”

from Center for Action and Contemplation  
Daily Meditation, Wednesday, January 4,  
2017

Richard Rohr perhaps best names the gift of original blessing as our home when he writes: “As we rebuild Christianity from the bottom up, let’s start “in the beginning” with the very first chapter of the Bible, Genesis 1. The first image in the Judeo-Christian Bible reveals a creative, compassionate God: “God’s Spirit hovered over the water” (Genesis 1:2). The word “hovered” is the same word used to describe a brood hen, lovingly watching over her young, warming the eggs and protecting the hatchlings. The Bible begins with clear hints of growth, development, and evolution. God is a dynamic creator, a verb more than a noun.

Looking at Creation in progress, “God saw that it was good” five times and “found it very good” after the sixth day (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). We all need to know that this wonderful thing called life is going somewhere and somewhere good. It is going someplace good because it came from goodness—a beginning of “original blessing” instead of “original sin.” Matthew Fox illustrated this rather well in his groundbreaking book, *Original Blessing*. [1]

For some reason, most Christian theology seems to start with Genesis 3—which features Adam and Eve—what Augustine would centuries later call “original sin.” When you start with the negative or with a problem, it’s not surprising that you end with Armageddon and Apocalypse. When you start with a punitive, critical, exclusionary God, it’s not surprising that you see the crucifixion as “substitutionary atonement” where Jesus takes the punishment that this angry God intended for us.”

### “When I Am Among the Trees”

By Mary Oliver, from *Devotions: Selected Poems*

When I am among the trees,  
especially the willows and the honey locust,  
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,  
they give off such hints of gladness.  
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.  
I am so distant from the hope of myself,  
in which I have goodness, and discernment,  
and never hurry through the world  
but walk slowly, and bow often.  
Around me the trees stir in their leaves  
and call out, “Stay awhile.”  
The light flows from their branches.  
And they call again, “It’s simple,” they say,  
“and you too have come  
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled  
with light, and to shine.”

### Moments and Dates for Reference:

- Creation/Blessing/Loss
- Abraham and Sarah/ Blessing/Land and Generations – 1500 BCE
- Egypt/Captivity/Deliverance/Wilderness/Moses – 1280 BCE
- Promised Land/Monarchy/Civil War/Exile (Babylonian Captivity)/Prophets - 1240 to 1000 to 587 BCE
- Return/Ezra and Nehemiah/Occupied - 547 to 322 BCE
- Jesus/Temple Destroyed/ Diaspora – 70 CE
- Persecution/Holy Roman Catholic Church/ East and West/ Reformation – 312 to 1054 to 1517 CE
- Enlightenment/Nations/Denominations/ Today - 1685 to 1815 to 1965 CE
- Phillis Tickle, “Every 500 years there is a yard sale in the history of the people of faith.”

## "The Road Not Taken"

by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

## "Vulnerability"

By David Whyte from *Consolations*

"The only choice we have as we mature is how we inhabit our vulnerability, how we become larger and more courageous and more compassionate through our intimacy with disappearance, our choice is to inhabit vulnerability as generous citizens of loss, robustly and fully, or conversely, as misers and complainers, reluctant and fearful, always at the gates of existence, but never bravely and completely attempting to enter, never wanting to risk ourselves, never walking fully through the door."

## "In Blackwater Woods"

By Mary Oliver, from *American Primitive*

Look, the trees  
are turning  
their own bodies  
into pillars  
of light,  
are giving off the rich  
fragrance of cinnamon  
and fulfillment,  
the long tapers  
of cattails  
are bursting and floating away over  
the blue shoulders  
of the ponds,  
and every pond,  
no matter what its  
name is, is  
nameless now.

Every year  
everything  
I have ever learned  
in my lifetime  
leads back to this: the fires  
and the black river of loss  
whose other side  
is salvation,  
whose meaning  
none of us will ever know.  
To live in this world  
you must be able  
to do three things:  
to love what is mortal;  
to hold it  
against your bones knowing  
your own life depends on it;  
and, when the time comes to let it go,  
to let it go.

## Notes



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