

There's No Place Like Home!

The Lord blessed us with some great meetings in Germany. God is never restricted by geography. It was a hard working time; we had little time for sightseeing, but we hope to see more of Europe another day. Although we're still a little affected by jet lag, we look forward to getting back on schedule. Thank you for your prayers for Mrs. Pope and me. We were a real team - she played piano and I preached! As I was driving down the street the day after our arrival, I saw a pickup with an American flag flying out the window. Before I knew it, a tear came to my eye. There really is no place like home. Along these lines I want to say a word about home in general.

1. Home is much more than a place; it is people.

Certain events stand out in our youth that as long as we live, will never dim. One of them is the time we arrived in east Texas and Dad said, "We're going to drive out to old West Mountain." This is the community where the Popes moved to after my dad was born in Big Sandy in 1913. He was excited as he approached the old homestead, or I should say, what was left of the old homestead. Only two remnants remained: the brick portion of the well and the lower half the chimney. As we walked around the site, Dad explained what took place and with whom and when. The outstanding trademark of his explanations was with whom certain events took place. Although the place was almost non-descript, the memories of the lives who filled those rooms was very much intact. In the depression it was not difficult to avoid building one's lives around material possessions, because they didn't have any. They were wealthy with relationships. When we think about home, we think about people. God said to Abraham, "*And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age*" (Genesis 15:15). Even the joy of our afterlife is that we'll be with our Lord and loved ones who have gone on before. That is what makes Heaven really Heaven.

2. Home is where unconditional love is given.

Years ago a young lady reared up in a very strict environment ran off with a young man that most of the townspeople believed was far below her worth. The question was asked why did she run off with such a worthless thing as he? A wise man gave the answer, "Because she found something in the young man that she did not find in her home...acceptance." A main quality that goes into the ingredients of home is unconditional love. Unconditional love does not mean you always approve of the behavior and decisions of the people within that framework, but it does mean that their misguidance does not jeopardize your family relationship. Sometimes your display of unconditional love will serve as a means of bringing them around to God's way of thinking. I appreciate the words of Jesus, "...*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness...*" (Acts 26:14-16). Our Lord was not going to use Paul until he responded to the call of God upon his life, as indicated by the words, *purpose, minister, and witness..* What I want us to notice is that God had the plans ready before he accepted God's plan. God takes the initiative! A great lesson could be learned. Rather than pessimistically giving up on those we care about and love, have plans ready for their positive response!

3. Home is where God is real.

Dr. Vance Havner tells a story that parallels Dad taking us to the West Mountain homestead. He tells of a time when he was fifteen years old and he carved in the chimney of his humble home in North Carolina these words, "Heaven my hope to gain." He tells how that after he had become a young man he was subject to the onslaughts of liberalism. He had come to the point where he was questioning all the precious absolutes of his faith. He became so misguided and confused that he finally came home to his

dad and told him of his serious doubts of everything. According to Dr. Havner's testimony, he returned to the old time faith, never to falter again. When he was sixty-five years old, he returned again to his old homestead. He said the house was gone and all that remained was the lower portion of their old chimney. He said, "I went to the place where I had written those words fifty years before, "Heaven my hope to gain." He said, "Time and the elements had done their best to remove most of the sentence. But two words still remained, 'Heaven and hope.' Then he made the application. Dr. Havner said, "The wind, rain, and tempest of liberalism and non-belief hammered against my soul and through the years many of my faculties have faded, but there are two things that are still and always will be inscribed upon my soul, 'Heaven and hope.'

Home is where our faith finds mooring. Home is where virtue is applauded. Home is people. Home is where unconditional love is given. Home is where God is real!

It's great to be home! I love you all!

- Pastor Pope -

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