Lessons: Isaiah 42:1-12
I Corinthians 12: 4-13

-- a sermon by The Rev. Hilton Smith
Wellesley College Chapel
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THE LIFE OF THE NEW COMMUNITY

^My theme today is the Life of the New Community, hereby concluding a series of four sermons. Thus far I have talked about the Love of God, the Light of Christ, and the Power of the Spirit. ~~These sermons~~ I have designed these sermons to try to give us all some concrete points of reference as we seek together, in the Apostle's words, to"work out our salvation with fear and trembling^' this year.

[My mind this morning is very much full of the impressions garnered on a trip to Western Pennsylvania this past week. I will spare you most of the details, but I think you'll understand when I share with you my experience of homecoming. It was very good to be home, <g5ren after a short trip.

[—[Mostly I remember a blur of airports, ticket lines , cocktail lounges, stewardesses, and clouds below. With a couple of important exertions, that's what the trip was for me, ^■■QuiaaOj. -M^a^blur. I have a friend who thinks he has a complex about airports. ~~I can understand that~~. He doesn't like being there; he says they're all the same the world over(which is probably true); and he has bad dreams about airports, After this week, I think I understand how he feels.

[But home is something else, is it not? ~~XXX~~ Or it can be. Remember Robert Frost's lines:

> Home is the place where, when you have to go there
> They have to take you in.

Home is a kind of ~~permanent~~ refuge from the world of change , an occasional citadel of quiet amidst the loud noise of world history. &ft was good indeed for me when I finally left the airport blur behind and settled, like some anxious infant, in the outstretched arms of my domestic quietude.

[{This morning I want to juxtapose these two points of reference, airport and home, with what I take to be aj~~fadtebtukLla£"fy~~e^that is both more biblical a lifestyle focal point and more relevant to the world in which we live. I'll call this the universal remnant community. But more about that in a moment.

A

I.

I take it that I don't have to say very much at all about the airport as a symbol of contemporary experience. We are very much a nation on-the-move, are we not. I don't have to speak about American mobility to members of an academic community. Along with all this ^Ms»s»»^mobi 1 ity goes a sense of anonymity, diagnosed for us two decades ago by David Riesman in his study The Lonely Crowd. Much of contemporary experience, then, is very much like an airport blur. We feel rootless, adrift, alone -- all those powerful modern metaphors isolation and alienation.

As a result, we don't find it easy to make commitments to e«sh other people, deep, long-lasting commitments. So many of our relationships are here today and^one tomorrow that personal commitment tends to drain us of our vital energies^ if we involve ourselves with too many people. Remarriage, for example, is a growing fashion these days, given the two-thifed divorce rate in many parts of the country. *&y the time of marriage number two, not to say three or four, I wonder how much personal energy is left for commitment and mutuality.

I Anyway, I don't have to belabor the ~~'reality~~ of airport existence. I think we all know what it is, and what many of its shortcomings are. Life tends to be Some a highly mobile, highly superficial blur, i£„ the-airport-doo o be-e<

~~the major symbolic expression- ojr your life or-mlne.,~~^

II.

The home, of course, is ~~something else.~~ different. Or we like to think of it that way. √ The home, indeed, has been a major point of reference^probably for miljenia. But more than likely/took on a new importance with the rise of industrial civilization and the breakdown of the old static.°sScial order. We could think of the existential meaning of the home, cryptically, in this way: Copernicus took away the universe as our home 5 Luther undercut the overarching authority of the Church,' the events of political history from the high ideals of the French Revolution to the dark days of Nazism,have undercut the sacral power of the state. So what is left?

Or, to make the point in a more contStnporary vein, if you are a speck of *(astutc-*
dust in a virtually infinite universe, if you live in an almost totally
secular world, and if your experience of the political order is an experience
of decadence! (Where can you turn?

Faced with this kind of situation, countless thousands have chosen
what seemed to be the last haven left, the home. Or, if you are younger
you would more likely be thinking in terms of some domestic surrogate
th©/single deep interpersonal relationship th^Trural commune,
Picture yourself, then, sitting in your easy chair with your feet propped
on a comfy stool, sometime wheni^ the weather outside is frightful and the
fire is so delightful. Alternatively, picture yourself down at the
Cape with a few trusted friends, louring on the livingroom floor of
that little bungalow, all stoned together, talking deep thoughts, maybe *statist*
light thoughts^ Either way, spending the evening at home with your spouse
or with your friendsr-either way LhLyxLxxxLxnxxaxxxx that domestic kind of
context functions as a refuge for you, taking you away from the airport
blur, surrounding you — if only for a moment — with a deep quietude.
I suppose that some people today, young <5^ old, would even Donate with the
sentiments, if not the style, of good olde Longfellow:

> Stay, stay at home, my heart, and rest;
> Homekeeping hearts are happiest;
> For those that wander they know not where
> Are full of trouble and full of care;
> To stay at home is best.

I There you have what seems to me to be two of the major lifestyle
alternatives of our decade, the airport blur on the one hand, and domestic
quietude on the other, whatever form it may take, straight or stoned,
conventional or exotic. (I know one family, for example, which has recently
become almost ecstatic about a new home in the rugged hills of Maine, away
from it all.H Albany, Maine has no airports; you can be sure of that.)

(ill.

NOW I don't want to stand m judgment on either of those contemporary lifestyle alternatives. There are surely some attractive sides to airport existence, as Harvey Cox argued in his Secular City; and there are good s ide s, CM I take it, to the quest for domestic quietude. JBach alternative has its less than attractive, even ugly,-swtes aspects,, But,I don't want to be keeping a tally sheet this morning, even if that kind of evaluative process were possible.KKXHX«feiix^__^

I want to identify a third point of reference, a third lifestyle focal point: what I'm calling this morning the universal remnant community. There, some obvious characteristics of this community which come to the fore as soon as you b egin to think about it.^It has a vision of God as the source and goal of all things, somehow; and of God's self-giving love taking the form of liberation in human history, *if*It looks to Jewus, <4 x the Christ of God, as the revealor, as the source of light. Its life is a spirited life, full of the power of the Spirit, who engages Lhmbers of the community with nature, with each other and wxLk neighbors around the world, and with the mysterious depths of God himself. That's the^particularity of the universal remant community,^ as I've been trying to sketch^these last weeks.

But this morning I want to attend more to the horizontal dimension to the dai» dimension of lifestyle. Life which has its focus in the universal remnant community is different from airport existence in several important ways, especially gjns^climate of trust and openness. This is not to say that this community's the best place^ to find a spouse,// or a friend to go to EurjjpeS^withy and so on. Rajrher, it's to say that this community is a good place to walk right in and be a brother or a sister, however new or staange you may feel yourself to be.

In this Chapel congregation, for example I sometimes get a little depressed

but from month to month, even week to week. But I hope it's just an open a secret that I invariably ~~But then I always~~ find myself impressed, and rejuvenated in spirit, when I see how new people identify themselves with us and we with them, as brothers and sisters, without a great deal of ceremony and with no red tape. Our doors are open here, and people continually come in and join with us, notwithstanding the transience of this academic ~~K~~ world and this suburban ~~milieu~~ milieu in which we live. We overcome transience by worshipping with each other as brothers and sisters. That's essential Way ~~that~~ our style differs from airport existence.

On the other side, the universal remant community differs from the home and its surrogates, ~~also in many respects,~~ especially insofar as we have a sense of mission^.which we share with our Christian brothers and sisters around the tzlobe. To put s>t in my best this catholic phraseology; the Mass we celebrate and the commitment we seek to cultivate, is the very Mass and the very commitment, in essence, that isA being celebrated and cultivated every hour of every day, somewhere on this planet. A small, even insignificant community we Christians may be in the eyesX^ of KHHKyansx most people, but out life together has a planetary scope, And it's ~~and~~ ie-rooted in Oecumenical tradition, which is thriving today -- especially in the Third World -- perhaps as never before since apostolic times/

Sometimes we American Christians ase so parochial! Sometimes we can see little beyond the ~~sometimes~~ occasionally ~~frequently~~ drab spectacle of our own faces! Do you know ~~though~~ about the manifesto issued by our South Korean brothers and sisters in the name of Christ ^against the dictatorship in that land/- ~~rn-Xlw-iiaiiE~~ia'f Clii'liu-te~~l Have you heard about the vitalities of the celebrations in the orthodox church throughout Russia? ^Do you realize that some of the most creative theological wont~~ ~~in the~~ we^^^s now emerging from the church in Latin America? Have you heard about the thousands of young people who celebrated Easter in France at the Protestant Monastery, Tay Zai, from all over the world? That's the kind of universal remant community your words of prayer and praise make you a part of this morning. Quite a different lifestyle focal

Sp?

The bread of the universal remnant community is broken for the world.

The wine of the universal remant community is spilled for the sake of the

poor and the oppressed and the lonely everywhere. We do have our Sisterhood

hsskhK and our brotherhood, ~~then~~ and our joys of our being together

in Christ's name,inspired by the Spirit,, 8ut with all this we siZo have

a deep and eve^-Waasing s®qse of mission.! jWe know, as we break bread and

drink wine together that we are called, not only to love ane another

and rejoice with one anfefchhEx another, as we sojourn for a time with each

others We know, too, that we are called to love the whole world, with all

its foibles,xint all its evils, and all its potential for good and the good

life, as well. ~~Ottr love for Gach-~~o-~~the~~^-~~and~~-our^-joy-in-being together—

over~~flow~~s-—-se~~nsitively and a~~ppropriately, to.be j ~~sure, but profusely~~

and—steadily -e. ye a -s o*

V.

I invite you anew this morning to participate in this kind of

universal remnant community, in this place, by the Grace of God, every

Sunday throughout the year. I invite you, to-, to inNitc your friends A®

j-foo,

to taste our 4MK worship^ from Sunday to Sunday, «feoEUs^Be with us

as we together seek to celebrate the love of God, the light of Christ,

and the power of the Spirit. Be with us, and invite others as well,

as we break bread and drink wine together.

|lf your friends are curious , try telling them that there '^'something

else! There's another focal point for their lifestyle, along side of

the airportWfetiB^ and the home, Tell them -- we're some thing el~~se~~!"

ife really are.

(Lo rd\jze^tha£^ye^^ ~~or our si~~ s tKL§.)