

## Column – Homes below and homes above

Earlier this week I officiated at the funeral of a dear soul who had attained her 95<sup>th</sup> year. One thing her daughter told me was how much she treasured her home. It was no “McMansion”; indeed, it was very modest, yet it was her castle.

Here daughter’s remarks prompted me to think more deeply about our earthly dwellings. They should be treasured and received as gifts from a good God, but they, like everything in this present age, are transitory . . . they pass away. Hence, they might be viewed as signposts pointing to something better and more lasting.

The flowers we plant outside them, the things we treasure within, are shadows and anticipations of a future abode, one not subject to rust and decay. The writer of Hebrews captures this thought when he says: **“For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come”** (Hebrews 13:14).

We might expand that thought further by saying that the fellowship we share and the joys we

experience in our little earthly palaces pale in comparison to the fellowship and joy we shall experience when God makes all things new.

Think of going into a house – perhaps your grandmother’s house – and being met by the aroma of chocolate chip cookies coming from the oven in the kitchen.

Think of bowls of good food being passed around the dining room table on Sunday after church. Perhaps there will be a plate of fried chicken or a roast, served along with bowls filled with vegetables from the garden.

Think of a blazing fire in the fireplace in wintertime with a dog lying lazily in front of it. Soon it will be suppertime, but not yet.

As tender and heartwarming these smells and sights are and as real as the joy we experience from them, they are somehow incomplete. They create desire and longing which can never be fully satisfied in this life. But this desire and longing is not

misplaced, as St. John the Divine would have us to understand in Revelation 21 when he writes;

**And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea . . . And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.**

Without a doubt the words here refer to the age that will follow Jesus' Second Coming. But even now, those who have departed in advance of the resurrection at the last day are in secure dwellings in Jesus' Father's house. Jesus tells us as much when he says: **“In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you”** (John 14:2).

Jesus' followers of all people are most blessed. In the words of hymn writer Thomas O. Chisholm: **“Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, Blessings all mine and ten thousand beside.”**

This gift of hope and strength, however, is not to be hoarded, but shared. Whom will you tell?

*O LORD, who never failest to help and govern those whom thou dost bring up in thy stedfast fear and love; Keep us, we beseech thee, under the protection of thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Collect for the Second Sunday after Trinity, Book of Common Prayer).*

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