

Communion Meditation: “Coming Home”

by Chaplain Paul Fritts, U.S. Army



Most of us have probably traveled for business or pleasure and know what it feels like to come home. Depending on how long we've been gone, a mental to-do list scrolls past our mind's eye as we thump a suitcase of dirty laundry on the bed in order to be unpacked. Usually we must collect the mail, pay some bills, and buy a few groceries to replace the science fair projects growing in the refrigerator. Fewer of us have probably traveled outside the United States for a combat deployment and know what it feels like to come home from war.

In the summer of 2005 I traveled from Iraq to my parents' home for R & R leave. My wife and children were visiting them and it was my hope the timing was such that I could surprise them all at once. I asked the taxi driver to drop me off three houses down, paid my fare, and then slung my duffel bag over my shoulder and marched up the street in my uniform hoping that I approximated the stereotypical Hollywood movie scene I imagined. The joyful surprise was a complete success. None of the normal coming home “busyness” of laundry, bills, or groceries could penetrate the pure delight of this homecoming.



What sort of homecoming do you experience each week at the Lord's Table? There are a variety of possibilities modeled for us in Scripture. For example, the story in Luke 10 of Jesus at the home of Mary and Martha reveals how Elders can become wrapped up in the busyness of presiding at the Communion Table, “worried and upset about many things.” Or is your experience like the joy of the prodigal son's father in Luke 15 (or perhaps you relate more to the son who came home)? Maybe there are weeks where, like Jesus in Mark 6, you feel similar to an unwelcome prophet at home, sensing no communion during Communion? In truth, not every military homecoming is as joyous as my experience. Similarly, not every encounter at the Lord's Table is a rapturous meeting of the Holy Spirit. The more important question is did you at least find your place at the table?

Along with our Jewish sisters and brothers at the first Passover during their escape from Egypt and who then wandered in the wilderness for a generation before their promised homecoming, we share a continuity of Communion in our weekly observance of breaking the bread and drinking the cup. This is an essential spiritual homecoming that binds us all together as a community of faith who share “one Lord, one faith, [and] one baptism” (Eph. 4:5). Because whether Soldiers are deployed in some remote combat zone or, like our fellow civilians, are safely home with loved ones, the bread and the cup - Emmanuel, God with us - means that coming home is wherever God sets the table and invites the faith community to abide.

Paul is one of many Chaplains endorsed and served by Disciples Home Missions. Your gifts to the Easter offering support DHM, which makes Paul's ministry possible.