

Matthew 28:16-20 (Genesis 1:1-2:4)

What is your dream home? Maybe you're living in it. For many people, the key word here is "dream." They know that such a home will never actually be a reality for them, but still, they like to dream that...someday...

In our Scripture readings for today we see two homes being built. The one in our Genesis reading, the other in our Matthew reading. In Genesis 1, God builds the house into which He places mankind. It's a dream home in every sense of the word. Throughout our entire Genesis reading there is not one word that is negative. It's all good. After each day, God saw everything that He had created on that day, and "*it was good.*" And after He finished building the house, complete with sun, moon, and stars, birds, fish, and animals, trees, plants, and then man, God said that it was "*very good.*" It was the dream home above all dream homes.

But as we see in Matthew 28, God begins the process of building another, and a very different house. This may seem to us a little strange. Home-dwellers do not work their way up to their dream home and then move to a different house. Once you settle into your dream home, that is where you want to stay. And yet, God builds another house for His people. The second house is hardly a dream home. Those who pass by wag their heads and laugh at it. They mock this house. They despise it. They even go so far as to vandalize it. They pick up stones and throw them, intent not just on breaking out the windows, but on killing those who live in the house. Some try to destroy this house that God has built with fire. There are those who try to block all roads leading to this house so that no one can actually enter it and live there.

But people do live there. It's not much to look at. Compared to the dream home God built in Genesis, this house is a shack--a rickety structure which looks like it could fall apart at any moment. But it doesn't. It stays the course. It bends in the wind but does not blow away. The foundation is strong. The foundation is the only thing that keeps this rickety house upright. This house, you probably know by now, is the church.

In Matthew 28, Jesus sends out His apostles with the command to build this house. The foundation is Christ Himself, and this house is built as His apostles baptize and teach in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Into this house you were brought when you were baptized. And so that you do not think of yourself as a stranger here, you have been, and continue to be taught everything that Jesus has commanded so that you see this house as your home. The food offered to all who live in this house is food for the soul--the living words of the Lord and His body and blood in the Sacrament.

This house, although it has cracks, and gaping holes, and it creaks in the wind, because even though the foundation is flawless, the inhabitants are not; the words of Jesus that are taught in this house are without error, but those who preach and teach, and those who hear, are filled with errors, flawed, imperfect, full of sin--yet, although this house is filled with such imperfection, it is the only house that will stand in the Judgment. Not even the gates of hell will overcome it. And so only those inhabitants who dwell securely in this house will be saved from eternal death.

But even knowing this, we who dwell in this house are tempted daily to go back to the dream home of Genesis 1. It's hardly a dream home anymore. Sin corrupted God's perfect house. All the "*it was good*" statements God had said about that dream home were swallowed up by evil and death. Yet, it still has an outward beauty to it even though the dreams within this dream home have proved to be

nightmares. The sun, moon, and stars still shine. Trees and plants still beautify this house. Mountains give it a majestic splendor. Birds sing sweetly and animals are good for pets or for food. But this house, as dreamy as it still appears, will not stand in the Judgment. It will be destroyed by fire. It's already on hospice. It's dying. It's death is fast approaching.

But still, it has an appeal to it which lures those who dwell safely within the house of the church to despise that rickety house and make their dwelling within the dying dream home of Genesis. What I'm saying is that a walk through the woods is more pleasant for some than singing praises to Jesus with other Christians. Getting work done and tidying things up out in the dying dream home holds more appeal for some than confessing their sins with the congregation and receiving absolution for their sin from the pastor. Gathering food out in the dying dream home by working the fields, or hunting its animals, beckons to some more than Jesus' invitation to hear His words of life and eat His holy food at His altar.

Even for those of us who gather safely within the house of the church, the temptation is to turn this rickety house into a dream home. We look for perfection in the church--the perfection we see in Genesis 1. But we see the weaknesses and sins of the pastor, the sins and failings of the Elders, the organist, the choir, the Council, the Altar Guild, and all the members, and within our hearts we secretly, or sometimes openly, despise and criticize this house that God is building.

We expect the perfection of Genesis 1 to be in the church, even though we ourselves, who expect everyone else to be perfect, are far from it. It's true that I expect perfect members, and you expect a perfect pastor. But we're not in the dream home of perfection anymore. Sin ruined that perfect world. We live in the church of Matthew 28--that rickety-looking shack into which our Triune God has brought us. The only thing that is perfect in this house is the foundation. Everything else is marred by sin.

But we have something in this rickety house that no dream home ever had. We have God's forgiveness in Christ. We have the word of the cross. We have Baptism, and Holy Communion, and Absolution. These are the foundation upon which we stand. And the walls of this house are covered in blood--the blood of our Lord who shed His blood for every sinner...for you. And so you, who make this house your dwelling, you live daily in God's grace, all your sins being washed clean in the blood of Jesus.

Your dream home is coming. It's reserved in heaven for you. Your place there is guaranteed because of your place here within the church. The same Christ who died for you, who baptized you, who absolves your sins, who gives you His body and blood, is the Christ who even now is preparing your room in the dream home of heaven. As He comes to you today, so you can be assured that He will come to you in the end to take you to your eternal dream home.

But until that day, you and I live in this imperfect world. We make our home out in the dying dream home into which we were born, and we dwell secure in the house of Jesus' church. We're all sinners. We're all corrupt. How can we expect our spouse, our family, our friends and coworkers, our pastor and our congregation to be perfect when we ourselves are just as sinful as everyone else? We do not live in our perfect dream home yet. Let's not look for it here where we live, work, and worship. But we do have forgiveness. God forgives you, my imperfect friend. He forgives you for Jesus' sake, just as He has forgiven everyone you know because He died for all. And so we can forgive each other. In heaven we will live in our perfect dream home. Until then, we live in God's mercy and forgiveness in Jesus. Amen.