

**San Lorenzo Community Church**

**United Church of Christ**

Sermon from Rev. Annette J. Cook

Sunday, May 14, 2017

**Hear now a reading from the Gospel of John 14:1-14**

**14** “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. <sup>4</sup>And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

<sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

<sup>8</sup>Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” <sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup>Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup>Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

<sup>12</sup>Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

**This ends the reading from the Gospel of John. Thanks be to God.**

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Somewhere in my junior high years, I became fascinated with astrology and my horoscope. I was born toward the end of June and that makes me a Cancer. I remember learning that this Zodiac sign would make me the kind of person who was “maternal, domestic and love to nurture others.” This sign would make me be a kind of person who spend a lot of time building the “nest” for my family.

Other words that are supposed to describe me are: Intuitive, imaginative, compassionate, emotional, creative, sympathetic, artistic and “impossible to be characterized.” Of course I am also theoretically described as: moody, confused, lazy, scatterbrained, vulnerable, unpredictable and gullible.

The truth is, on any given day, I resemble probably half of those descriptions but, on any given day, it changes which half I resemble.

But I rather like the idea that the stars knew before I did that I would be obsessed with my home. I am the one who rearranges the furniture every now and then, buys or makes a piece of art because something inspired me or I wanted more color in a space or needed to bring a new texture to the mix. When I was toddler, I’m told that I used to go around the house and fluff all of the pillows – everyone’s pillows and especially the pillows on the sofa. I would fluff them and then stand back and admire them. Hey, I was a toddler.

I want a place filled with color and meaning, with texture and design, with visual surprise and deeply sentimental objects, with music and history and inspiration. Here are Pink Theology Sunday, in the middle of our Earth Justice series, we celebrate that life is lived to its fullest includes the expression of the arts and culture and music and imagination and design. The earth is beautiful and we are each artists.

But maybe this why I am obsessed with Fixer Upper, the HGTV show starring Chip and Joanna Gaines. This show has officially become the most successful show ever to air on the HGTV network, setting a new all-time record for numbers of viewers and advertising dollars. It’s a huge hit with women ages 25-54; and a huge hit with men who want to root along with Chip on his favorite day of the year – Demo Day! OOH OOH OOH.

But the original was Bob Vila and “This Old House” which aired on public television. I remember Bob Vila and his old houses. My mom loved this show and learned how to program the VHS tape recorder just so she could catch every episode. As I have shared before, my mom was the fix-it person in my household. But the skills she learned from Bob Vila she mostly applied to her three-story general store and upstairs apartment dollhouse she had built from scratch. This huge dollhouse on a platform two-feet wide and four-feet long stood more than four-feet tall. Mom wanted this to be an authentic turn of the century home. So she hung onto every word from Bob Vila.

Yet, those ridiculously charming married hosts, Chip and Joanna Gaines, they are the whole package, the real deal. As they say, they take the “worst house in the best neighborhoods” and turn it into someone’s dream home. This show is the Lay’s Potato Chip of television – you can’t watch just one.

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And why not? Who wouldn't want to get all of the delight and satisfaction of home buying and home renovation in a one-hour happy-ending with none of the actual stress, uncertainty and over-budget nightmares that usually accompany home renovation? This show absolutely qualifies as one of my deep obsessions.

If you are like me, then you know you are obsessed with Fixer Upper if:

1. You've seen every episode and still tune in for the Marathon Saturdays.
2. You refer to Chip and Joanna by their first name and your spouse knows who you are talking about.
3. You suddenly want a sliding farm door in every room of your house.
4. You've started to imagine what your house would look like with shiplap in every room.
5. You've asked your significant other if, one day, you could please move to Waco, Texas.
6. When you are told no, you cannot move to Waco, Texas, you ask how much it might cost to bring Chip and Joanna to your house here.
7. You stand in your living room and ask yourself, "What would Joanna do?"

A few years ago I saw an art exhibit called "Open House: If These Walls Could Talk." It was fascinating to walk through the history of one house in San Francisco --- to hear about the different families who lived there: all of them were immigrants and you could see as the years went by, you were a witness to the rapidly changing technology which had marked their lives. The first running water and indoor plumbing, the first electricity, the first telephone and the first refrigerator.

All houses have histories, of course, whether we are aware of them or not. In fact, while I have lived in a number of different houses, for the most part I have not known their histories.

All of our houses have stories --- some of which we know and others of which moved on with those who lived there before us. Whether we can tell them or not, all of our houses hold histories shaped and shared by those who lived in them. So, when you think about it, for many of us, the most interesting part of the story is not the 'building' itself, those who built their lives inside.

And so when Jesus says to his disciples, God's house has many rooms, it is also a house with many stories. It could be that this house is similar to the homes of our childhoods. It probably has many things in common with homes we've bought and owned, fixed up, sold, and moved on from.

If we were lucky we have had a place where we call home because it offers us a sense of unconditional love, inspiration and encouragement; a place of refuge in hard times and comfort in sad times and celebration with each new milestone.

And so it is that Jesus speaks of this home of promise -- a place of many rooms -- a place for everyone -- a home that never runs out of room -- where all doors lead to welcome.

Today we are reminded that this home is marked and made, shaped and molded by God's love -- by the builder herself. And this Builder assures us that there is plenty of room in this house -- that the attic won't have to be pushed up and the upstairs remodeled for us because, God already knows we are

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expected --- and when we arrive, each one of us, we will feel at home. Not only is there plenty of room, but the doors are open and the love is unconditional and it has been prepared just for us.

It is no wonder, of course that these words are often read at funerals --- at that time when we need to hear these words of comfort most of all. What a gift it is to stand in the promise that when our time for 'making a home' here is done, a place is waiting for us for us in God's own house.

“And,” Jesus, says, there is an “and” here. Jesus says, “and, you already know the Way.”

It's hard sometimes to recognize what you already know. To make explicit that which you live by on a day to day basis. To stop and observe the most obvious things around you. Do you see beauty when you step outside your door? Do you see life imitating art and art imitating life? Do you wake in the morning with a song in your head? Do you see what is around you and also see what is yet to be?

I dare say, you already know the way. You already know what it means to live into God's love, living into a reality of welcome and belonging, of encouragement and purpose. You already know that this life requires your inspiration and your artistic expression.

Every house is a fixer-upper. And every person, including me, is a fixer-upper. Yes, this is a fixer-upper world. And every time we add a little more love, we have brightened the room and changed its potential.

1. It's about grandma showing the baby the beach for the first time.
2. It's about the toddler reaching up to play the piano keys.
3. It's about the kids putting flower power stickers on that old Volkswagen.
4. It's about seeing the surprised look on Dad's face when he finally got him the guitar he always wanted.
5. It's about building an authentic old fashioned dollhouse with a General Store.
6. It's about using fabric to create and express and offer your gifts to others.
7. Life is about making music and singing together.
8. It's about creating new art.
9. It's about sharing a culture.
10. It's about the love we share.

You already know the Way. The Way is always living large with the deep and true knowledge that there is more than enough room in our hearts and in our lives, more than enough hope to inspire us to do the next thing, more than enough love to transform the world one room at a time.

Amen.