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Festival of the Ascension – John 14:1-6 – Ascended to Take Us Home!  
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If you think about it, our lives here in this world are really a lot like a business trip. We're here for a reason, and there's work to be done. God wants us to be faithful in how we use our talents and abilities, he wants us to reflect his love and glory in everything we do, and he wants us to get to know him better and help others do the same.

But also just like a business trip, we're not where we're supposed to be yet – we're not home. We have a purpose, sure; but whenever you're on a business trip, there's no permanence. You're on the road, you're not settled, and you haven't reached your destination yet.

But this place is like a pit-stop where we call home and find the strength and encouragement to keep going. It can be tough being away in this sinful world, but though our tears may fall, though our hearts may ache, and though we may have a heavenly homesickness, we have hope because Jesus is there waiting for us with open arms. That might seem strange because he's gone and it hurts to be apart, but take heart, because there is a reunion coming. Jesus may have ascended back to heaven, but he didn't forsake us or leave us forever. No, our Savior, our brother Jesus ascended so that one day he could take us home, too.

And that's exactly what he told his disciples in the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”* By all accounts, the disciples had good reason to let their hearts be troubled. Jesus had just told them that he was going to be betrayed, by one of their own no less; that Peter, the leader of the disciples, would deny Jesus three times and the rest of them would abandon him; and that Jesus would be arrested, savagely beaten, and killed by crucifixion and so he wouldn't be around anymore. If that was going to happen to Jesus, would they be next? Were the last three years of their lives following this guy a total waste? What are they going to do now?

And we all know that we have questions like those, too. There's so much unrest in our lives, from the basic things dealing with health issues or paying for a car or a house or putting food on the table and providing for our families or worrying about how your kids and grandkids are doing, all the way up to wondering just how bad it might get before long in this world and even in this country for faithful Christians. Are we going to be able to endure what's ahead? A lot of times our hearts are troubled, too, but here's how you can soothe those fears: trust in Jesus, your Savior-God, and keep your eyes on your heavenly home.

See, the greatest way to endure the bumps in the road is to keep in mind how great it's going to be when you finally get where you're going. Our Savior promises that the heaven he's preparing for us has all the pleasures and amenities of home and more – it has all the comfort, warmth, and love; it has all the rest, peace, and joy; it has all the tenderness, happiness, and blessedness of the place where you are meant to be, the place that was prepared specially for you with the care that only your Savior can show.

And as warm and inviting as it is, this isn't just going to be any old house you might come to, either. This house Jesus is preparing for us is a mansion, a palace even. Back in those days a king would live in a grand and glorious palace with his heirs and all the rest of his children right there together. And that's exactly what Jesus is promising us here. As heirs of God's heavenly Kingdom, as heavenly royalty, we're going to live like kings right there together with the King of kings. Anything you've ever wanted here, you'll have there. Anything you've had to go without here, you'll have more than enough there. Each one of us is going to have our own special place in our Lord's mansion with all the most lavish gifts and graces that we could ever possibly imagine, and we're going to reign with him and next to him in glory forever and ever.

And ultimately, that's what really makes a house a home. Not just the comforts or the stuff that's in it, as awesome and amazing as that's going to be. It's the people you're with, the people you love. The best thing about the place Jesus is preparing for us is that he himself is going to be there, along with all the rest of our Christian loved ones

forever. Heaven is going to be so glorious that it's really impossible to fully describe, but the best part of it all and what really makes it our true home that we should look forward to and even long for is the simplest thing about it: it's where we belong because it's where our Savior and our dearest friend Jesus is, it's where our heavenly Father is, and it's where all of our brothers and sisters in faith will be. That all means that the place Jesus ascended to prepare for us in heaven really is our home and there's absolutely nowhere better for us to be than together with him forever.

Jesus ascended to prepare a special place just for us, but he also ascended to make sure we're going to make it there one day. "*Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'*" Jesus completed his Father's plan of salvation and ascended back to heaven to open the way also for us, and now we can be certain of our place in Paradise because he's our Savior that we cling to, our Champion who protects us, and our Shepherd who takes us up into his arms and carries us to our heavenly home.

And all that really ties in with two other reasons that Jesus ascended back to heaven, too. Jesus also ascended back to heaven to intercede for us with the Father and to rule over all things for our good. When we trust in Jesus for salvation, he throws open for us the gates to heaven. When we believe that he is the Truth and speaks the truth, he wipes away all our sins, speaks to the Father in our defense, and wins for us eternal life. No one comes to the Father except through Christ, so he put us on his back and he himself is going to take us there.

And not only that, but then he also defends us from the devil and all the powers of evil here in this sinful world. Right now he's ruling over all things for the good of his Church, to ensure that his chosen people make it home to heaven one day. So no matter what happens to you and around you, no matter what the devil and this world might put you through to try to make you stumble and fall away from Christ, know that your Savior Jesus is ascended and seated at the right hand of God, that nothing in all creation can stand against him or rip you out of his hands, and so nothing in all creation can keep him from holding you close to himself and taking you home to be with him in heaven.

In my Father's house are many rooms, Jesus said. He told you because that's your house too, and one of those rooms has your name on it. One day Jesus is going to take you home to be with him there forever, and you'll never have to leave or say goodbye again. You may be away from Jesus right now – in body, not in spirit – but absence makes the heart grow fonder, so children of God and heirs of his heavenly Kingdom, princes and princesses under the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, know that your reunion is coming soon, because all of your gracious God's work throughout human history points to it: Jesus was born to save us, he's risen to free us, and he ascended to take us home! Amen.