**The Bigger Picture** | **Homecoming** *(Restoration NT)*

**SERIES RECAP//INTRO**

Over the past several weeks we have taken time to walk through the whole biblical narrative to understand *the bigger picture* of Gods story and the part we play in it. We also learned that God once walked freely with his people in perfect harmony. But because of sin, this caused a disharmony in the relationship with God and his people.

The good news is that through Jesus we have a pathway back to God and in the process, God is working to make all things right again in this home by enhancing it with a better home to come.

***Opening Illustration*:** When you hear **Homecoming**, what comes to mind?

[**LEADER TIP**: For most students, they’re immediately going to think of their school dance or Friday Night football game. But allow space for the question to draw an answer or a memory. Feel free to share a fun memory at your homecoming. It’s ok if you date yourself a little J]

* The point is to get students to see that God is also planning a **homecoming**, reuniting us back to himself.

Homecoming has become a staple in school tradition since the early 1900’s. The point of Homecoming is to spur on school spirit by bringing together previous students (Alumni), current students, and the community as a whole.

Did you know God desires to do something similar but even better in the coming future?

* A man by the name of John was used by God in a special way to share what this coming home will look like through an unforgettable vision. An angel showed John a life of perfect living with God and others in a home that can’t be broken or taken away. This sounds like the kind of home I want to be a part of, how about you?

**Big Idea**: **Gods homecoming will bring ALL Christians together to be with him forever.**

1. **God is prepping a new home**

21:1 — I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

John opens this chapter by describing to the best of his ability what he is seeing. What he sees is like nothing any human has ever seen before. This new home is beautiful, perfect, and almost impossible to describe, yet God allows Him to see what is to come and share with future readers. The new home that is on the horizon is not meant to destroy the current home but to fulfill all that it was meant to be. This new city is almost like the 2nd city that is new and improved.

**ILLUSTRATION**: Chicago has many nicknames and known for many things like Deep Dish pizza, Michael Jordan, The Bean, Da Bears, etc. But did you know one of Chicago’s nicknames is the “Second City”? This isn’t “second” as in a competition but “second” as in another or addition to.

Legend has it, in the late 1800’s a lady by the name of Mrs. O’Leary and her cow were the cause of The Great Chicago Fire. Yes, this once beautiful city we call home was once but a pile of ashes. It’s hard to believe when we see all the amazing architecture, restaurants, museums, and people. But all of this would be non-existent if it weren’t for a group of people who SAW a better future in the middle of unhopeful – hopeless – circumstances.

**This vision John sees is an encouragement to you and I that our temporary problems, though they feel like eternity, will too pass because God so loves His children.**

Because of God’s tender mercy,

the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us,

to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

and to guide us to the path of peace.”

**Luke 1:78-79 NLT**

**Application:** We have something amazing to look forward to. That hope pushes us in times of difficulty. And we are reminded that although we have received the promise, we haven’t experienced it yet. So, we must **diligently push forward in faith so that we can enter into that rest one day** (Hebrews 4:11).

T: Gods plan has always been to dwell with his children.

1. **God's personal presence will be with his people**

21:3 — “” *Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them*.”

Home is not just a place, it’s a person. A home is not a home because of a building. What makes a home “Home” is the people who fill it. A church is not a church because of a building. What makes the church “church” is God’s presence revealed in the lives of His people.

What makes this new home “the best home” is not the streets of gold, the pearly gates, or even the happy reunions we will enjoy with believing loved ones.

**The best thing about heaven is the loving presence of God Himself**.

After the fall, Gods presence on Earth was constrained to a physical building – a temple. Meaning, only a few people who followed God’s specific rules had special access to Him, and the rest were separated.

Look at the language John uses to describe this separation in verse 1 – He says, “and the sea was also gone.” If you’ve ever been in the sea or ocean, you understand how big and intimidating that amount of water can be, especially when you’re surrounded by it. John is encouraging his readers that this once body of water will be no more. In the same way, our separation from God’s presence will be no more.

We get to experience glimpses of God’s presence here on earth through personal devotion and community. But a time is coming where all we will do is be in the presence of God.

**Question**: *Have you ever hung out with someone you really enjoyed being around*?

[**LEADER TIP**: Share a story of a person you really enjoy/ed being with and how you felt when you were no longer with them. **POINT**: Our soul’s will always be discontent when not in God’s presence. WHY? Because we were designed to be in constant relationship with him.]

T: When all things seem to be going wrong, we can still have joy because……

1. **God will make all things right**

21:4 — “*He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away*.”

1. Verse 4 tells us that God is not only going to remake the world and eradicate sin, he is also going to take away all lingering effects of sin in our hearts and lives.

Tears of regret. Tears of guilt. Tears of shame. Tears of broken promises. Tears of loss and separation. Tears over what was taken from us. Tears of loneliness and secret anguish.

We all have our own stories of how our sin and other people’s sin have harmed us.

**One day Jesus is going to make it right**. **The same hands that were pierced are the same hands that will wipe away all tears.**

Our eternal home is like nothing we’ve ever experienced before because it is a place that is free from sin, death, fear, guilt, and sorrow. Never again will we experience the consequences of our fallen nature—separation from our loved ones, loss, worry, sickness, crime, pain, or injustice.

Rather, **we will be absolutely free to become all God created us to be in our new home in his presence** —to His praise and glory. And best of all, we will enjoy full, wonderful fellowship with our Lord and Savior forever.

**T: Now that we have these truths about what God is going to do in Jesus’ triumphant return, what do we do in the meantime? Let’s look at what our response should be at the revealing of our new home**.

**Our response to John’s revelation** (5-8)

1. *Receive God’s free salvation*
2. The passage ends with a strong warning to the reader: Anyone who turns away from Jesus by disobeying God and rejecting His ways will die and forever be separated from God into what the bible describes as the lake of fire. Hell is a real place. Jesus spoke about it quite often in His ministry on earth. God is a righteous judge, and all sin will be paid for – either by Jesus who died for those who would place their faith in him or by those in hell who refuse His salvation.
3. The Good News – God’s mercy and forgiveness is available right now. His salvation is free! We don’t have to earn it. Verse 6 speaks of this free salvation when it says, “To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life.”
4. *Believe and Persevere*
5. We are all capable of believing in something or someone. Afterall, you believed someone when they said we would have group today and here you are. But it would be a disservice if all you did was show up and never took Jesus at his word and allowed him to show you what real life is. That’s why I believe John wrote, “These words are trustworthy and true.” (John 5:24)
6. We should not live by our feelings and emotions alone. We must believe the trustworthiness and true word of God which helps us to better understand our emotions and how they fit into our lives, as well as what is true about us and who God is. He has a home for you and I who believe in Jesus.

**GOSPEL**:

**This world that we currently call home will eventually all pass away. But a home that will never be destroyed is on the way for those who await Jesus’ return**. Perhaps you’re here hearing this message. and you’ve experienced some pain and loss in your life. I’m here to tell you that, Jesus not only will wipe your tears in the future, but He desires to show you His love now. He wants you to know that He is making all things right again.

**Today, marks the end of this series but it’s our hope that it marks the beginning of your Homecoming story with God through faith in Jesus.**

[Leader note: you can add this section anywhere you see fit in the message and word it how you’d like.] Each week of this series, we’ve explored more of the Big Picture of God’s story and how he is calling us home. Along the way we’ve been putting together a big puzzle. The little pieces by themselves might not make much sense, but as we put the pieces together, the big picture starts to become clear. So each week we’ve added pieces to our puzzle to see what God has in store for us. Here’s how we left our puzzle last week. [Show first image below]. Are you ready to see the final image? [Show image two below. Let the students take it in and draw attention to the father welcoming his child home]. God’s heart is for us to be *home* with him. He is ready to welcome each one of us there with a warm hug.



A couple of men standing in front of a house

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What will the new heaven and new earth be like?
2. God describes the church and Jesus figuratively through the imagery of a bride and her groom. What can we do, as the bride of Christ, to be prepared for the coming Lord?
3. Why can we not dwell with God now? What does the new reality show us about sin?
4. Which of the promises in verse 4 or most comforting to you and why?
5. How can you use these promises to comfort someone who is struggling?