

**The Bethel Pulpit**

**Pastor Jerry Tews**

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 312 Wisconsin Ave, Madison WI 53703

**Text:** John 17:20-26 & Rev. 22: 12-14, 16-17, 20-21

**“We are all just walking each other Home”**

Remember that time when you walked with somebody you really liked? During one of the interludes between calls my family and I rented a home very close to an abandoned railway line that had been turned into a very fine walking/bicycle path. We were less than 100 yards from where we could access the path and we did so on a fairly regular basis. We were under tension at the time and what a beautiful gift this path was for us. I recall that I often would begin the walk all tensed up and crabby only to have the anxiety subside and be replaced by a greater inner peace and quiet. The problems didn’t go away but the action of the two of us walking together, often in silence, literally drained the tension and lowered the blood pressure.

Ram Dass, an American spiritual teacher, psychologist, and author made the statement, “in life we are all just walking each other home.” You may have seen this statement in any number of ways—posters, pictures, or elaborate wall hangings. “We are all just walking each other home.”

I love this statement because in its simplicity it says so much. It dictates what we are to be doing today, and for a life time, with those near and dear to us and for those the world over who are complete strangers to us. You and I, among all of the things we might feel we have to do, are very simply asked to respectfully, compassionately, and faithfully walk each other home. How superficially deep a statement “we are all just walking each other home.”

In our Gospel lesson this morning John once again takes us back to the night before Jesus is crucified when he chooses to go to the Garden of Gethsemane to be alone with three of his disciples. They, as we remember, very quickly fell asleep while Jesus prayed. Do you know what the gist of that prayer was? He was praying to the Father to make sure that He would let Jesus walk you and me home. “Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”

When I have preached on this lesson before I often took a different track and using other words of the text--“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word that they may all be one.” I then turned this into an instruction on Jesus’ part—go out and do what you can to make sure that all those who follow me are in one group and not separated into various cliques and divisions. What a difference! It goes from a friend walking alongside to a teacher giving instructions. Now both of these are important and I hope we never tire of reaching out and working with other believers toward overcoming differences that do not need to divide us, but for today, focus on this great promise and gift God is giving us—our God is “willing and committed to walking along side of us as we in life are on our journey home.”

The power of this gift of having both God and family walking home together came very alive to me this past week. A nephew of mine at age 48 died very suddenly of heart failure. We as family and friends walked alongside Shannon’s parents, his brother and his family and all of the extended family and friends that gathered last Wednesday. It was a painful but very powerful time for us to “walk each other home.” Have you not experienced that same thing, possibly more than once, where in crisis folks near to you and ones not so well known gather and literally walk with you through overwhelmingly difficult times? You know what? That is the promise of Easter. Easter is our gift at all times in our lives. That intimate walking alongside of each other is not just for times when we are experiencing extreme and sudden loss, that intimate walking alongside of each other, and God’s walking with us, it is an everyday, every hour of the day reality. It’s happening right now here in this sanctuary or wherever you might be. We walk with those who are graduating at this time, those who are experiencing the birth of a child, those who celebrated marriage here yesterday, as well as any and all who are beginning something new, like Pastor Mike as he begins his ministry here with us at Bethel. Our calling, our task, our “job” is to be about “walking each other home.”

Take a look in your life at this time. Have you ever asked the question what am I here for, or what is it that I am supposed to do? Let me ask a couple of other questions--who you are walking with today? Who are the ones you are connected with even though you may be separated by many miles or even continents? Today can be a great day to let them know once again that you are walking with them. This may require vulnerability and the journey may not go exactly where we thought it would or should go. But this is the life giving gift we can shared with each other, our willingness to extend ourselves so that all that is needed by those walking with us might be given. As our Lord prayed that all of creation would be with him until they would see his glory so may we never tire of walking with one another sharing direct help or giving healthy space, whatever is needed, for them on their, and our, journey home.

Jesus wants us to be in communion with him and in communion with one another. As we walk each other home remember, we are not asked to be perfect, we are asked to be faithful. May God be with all of us as we walk each other home. Amen.