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From the desk of Rick Hagans

On The Road With Pastor Rick:

“Don’t it make you want to go home
Don’t it make you want to go home
All God’s children get weary when they roam
Don’t it make you want to go home.”

Joe South

*“When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home.”
(Mark 2:1)*

I’ve spent a good bit of my life rambling. I ran away from home when I was just a boy to “go into all the world and preach.” The fervent sermon of a country preacher touched my yet tender heart. When the preacher read from the Book of Isaiah, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” I echoed Isaiah’s answer, “Here am I, send me!” I made the short walk down the aisle to let the preacher know I’d be going. He was proud of me for coming down. He said I had to stand at the front of the church so all the old ladies who’d given me kool-aid and cookies at Bible School could hug my neck and tell me how proud they were I’d come down to the altar. None of them seemed to understand I hadn’t “come down”, I was “going out.” Even at 9, the road and the Lord beckoned me. I guess you can’t expect old women who just sit at home baking cookies and making kool-aid to understand the call of the highway and a Higher way.

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I did go. I got caught and sent home. But just one night on my own, walking down a country road with the cross before me, kool-aid behind me did something to me. Somewhere deep in my soul the Lord beckoned me and smiled, “So, how do you like following Me?” I told Him I liked it just fine and I smiled back.

I’ve been following Jesus for the better part of 42 years now. Some gauge their longevity with a gold watch and retirement account. I gauge mine by simply making sure I keep Jesus in sight and try to keep up with Him. He’s kept me on the road a lot. In fact, I’m writing this message from Ireland. I’m preaching here even as I dream of coming back some future time to walk the entire length of the green, green hills here. Maybe for my retirement. Maybe when I get old.

For now I’m in Ireland. I was in Haiti last week. I’ll be in New York in two weeks and from there down to Guatemala. R.C., Winchester, Blake and I will drive back from Guatemala to Reynosa, Mexico where we’ll meet Kim, Elliot and Dreamer. We’ll be in Reynosa for the week of Spring Break for mission work and then we’ll drive back home. (***)Our Guatemala trip was later cancelled when R.C., Winchester and Blake were arrested by Mexican Federales for “smuggling shoes.” They had 1,000 pair of shoes Winchester had raised by walking across Maryland, Delaware and Connecticut with me last year. The Mexican police stole the shoes and our ministry van. They still have both. It’s been quite the story for my boys. Like they say, “the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.” You can read all about their adventure at; <http://chesterhagans.blogspot.com/2010/03/mexican-government-stole-what-jesus.html>). After all that, I go back to New York to preach once more before I come back home to rest for a couple of weeks. I’ve got to figure out how to rest. maybe that can be an adventure too.

Home...it has a nice ring to it. I’ve come to realize no one can probably appreciate home like one who’s never there. I haven’t rambled all across America and on around the world running away from home. I’ve done it calling men and women to come Home. This is the reason Jesus left His home in Heaven and came down to earth. He travelled about telling folks who’d grown quite flustered with their flitting about that they could come home. Eden had ended, but there was an even better place He was inviting them to, Himself, “In My Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:2)

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Jesus even went on to tell the people He met, people wandering about in the foggy deception that this world was their home, that He was going to go back to the real Home and get things ready for them. He wasn't sending an angel, or the ghost of Betty Crocker to get things ready back Home, He intended to do it Himself. That must've meant a lot to those guys who had spent a good bit of their life wandering around with Him, telling other people about Home. Jesus was going to prepare a place for them in Heaven. He promised to do it, promised to do the work Himself. They had seen His work as a carpenter. I imagine the things He'd built with His own hands were outstanding. What's a table and some chairs when you've built universes? They had seen His work as a healer, causing cripples to walk and the blind to see. When someone who's raised the dead tells you He's going to make you a nice Home, you've got to bet it made their heads swim with the possibilities. If He hung the stars in the skies, what are the lights in our new Home going to be like? If He'd painted a million sunset skies, what color would He choose for your living room? Jesus had already told His disciples He was the "Bread of Life" and "Living Water." No doubt their mouths watered at the thoughts of what He might have waiting for supper in this new Home He was going to prepare. Eventually He did leave, by way of a cross and a borrowed tomb. He borrowed it because He knew He'd only need it for a few days. He ascended back to Heaven, but they never forgot their time on the road with Him...or the promises He had made. They spent the rest of their lives roaming the roads and dreaming of Home. Even after He'd left them, they continued to roam. Thomas to India, John to the Isle of Patmos, even Peter, who loved his trusty old boat back at his home, finally left it. He wandered on to Rome and finally to a cross turned upside down. They're all Home now, I bet they're enjoying it.

Sometimes I wonder as I wander, what the Home Jesus is preparing for us will be like. I know He's the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, but does He know anything about home making? Sometimes it seems we've portrayed Him so ethereal that He seemed to float about like dust dancing on sunbeams. You'd seem to think, I've thought before myself, that Jesus was so otherworldly He couldn't possibly notice homey things, much less appreciate them. What's a good comfortable sitting chair for a spirit? How could the Light of the World appreciate a breakfast table that sat so to catch the morning sun? Could He who was the Bread of Life enjoy the smell of momma baking bread in her kitchen? Since He had been a part of creating all the trees, would a good climbing tree in the backyard mean much? Angels had sung His name in praise forever, so would momma calling Him from the back door, "Come home come home" move Him at all? What would "home" be like for one who calls all men home Himself?

Did home mean anything to Jesus? After all, isn't God omnipresent, everywhere all at once? Well, one place He loved being was home. I think Jesus enjoyed coming home. I think He put something intrinsic in the heart of all mankind to want to come back home now and then. Jesus, who was "fully God" was nonetheless, "fully man". While He knew there was that Home on high, there was something that drew Him back to His home here on earth. Mark 2:1 says, "*When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home.*"

For Jesus, back in Capernaum, home may have been the original house Joseph and Mary raised Him in. It could have been the house of cousins or close childhood friends. Whoever owned it, here in Mark's Gospel, Jesus called it "home". Like other houses of it's day, it would've been quite simple. Carpenter's salaries didn't buy much. Probably two or three rooms with a courtyard around it. Mary would've cooked for Jesus out in the courtyard. The smell of supper mixing with wood smoke and flowers. Animals would be hobbled in the evening within the walls. You would've heard the sound of sheep and cows and chickens mixed in melody with children's laughter. The houses were close together. Your neighbors were your extended family and your friends. Folks shared a well and their garden's bounty and probably a bit of gossip over boundary walls. At night, oil lamps would flicker, casting dancing shadows about. Families would sit close to eat what momma had cooked. A meal grown by dad and gathered up by brothers and sisters. They'd sleep at night, not far from one another. No doubt their dreams were sweet.

Something was sweet about home for Jesus because it drew Him back. Later He would say, "*Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has not a place to lay His head.*" (Luke 9:58) The road He travelled would indeed take Him far from home. He was already far from home when He

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was born in a manger.

Coming from Heaven to earth is quite a trip. His first cry as a baby must've had the pain of being homesick for His throne mixed with hunger, another first for God.

We sing, "He came from Heaven to earth, to show the way..." But do we ever really stop to think how far that really was and all it really meant? God became man. He who had never known any need. Jesus was fully God, and as such was limitless, perfect, complete. Yet He became fully man and as such, scripture says, was, "acquainted with all our sorrows." He would learn what it meant to feel hunger and thirst, pain and betrayal. Think for a moment about what has been your greatest hurt, your greatest pain...remember what your darkest hour was like. Jesus felt the same. In fact, not to diminish your own scars, but simply to tell a truth we oft skip over, we have to admit Jesus felt far, far more. Because Jesus felt ALL our pain. He bore it.

Later He would live out the prophecies Isaiah foretold of Him. "*He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteem Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows...*" (Isaiah 53:3-4) The cross we'll celebrate in just a few days at Easter was real, so was all our Lord suffered there. Suffered because He had come to make His home here among men, among us.

Living on the road as I do, away from my home and family 150-200 days every year, I think a lot about home. I began to think about what makes "home" so special to all of us is probably something God put in the heart of all men. We're all hard-wired like the swallows that always return to San Juan Capistrano, to come home ourselves. I have birdhouses. Gourds I've put up with my momma and Uncle Joel ever since I was a little boy. Purple Martins migrate all the way back from Brazil, crossing the Gulf of Mexico to the exact birdhouse they were hatched in. I feel like a royal kng preparing lodging for my martins who've wandered far. To see them dance across an Alabama evening sky is to feel the joy of helping one's homecoming become complete. I hope the martins like the home I've built for them this year. Darn neighbors keep building and blocking their flight. I've got a chainsaw. I'll help my feathered friends come home. Home is something more than where we hang our hats. Home is the place where we first heard our father's voice. It is that place where we learned to walk and speak our first words. If you were like most, those first words were probably some childish stammering of "daddy" or "momma". "Da-da" or "momma" summed up all we needed as a baby, because our parents made sure we were cared for. Not only were we fed and protected at home, we were cleaned when dirty (babies do that). It was at home we learned how to laugh and to have our tears dried. We lived recklessly, rambunctiously as children, always pushing to the very edge. Momma cleaned our wounds and put bandaids on our knees when we pushed too far or skated too fast. We were safe at home, and happy and loved. Jesus must've felt the same way about His home because when He was tired and weary, He returned there.

We all need a home to come home to. The sad reality is in this day and age that's not always possible. Transient occupations, absentee fathers, the 21st Century push to get ahead has all led to a lot behind. Unfortunately we've left more than just the old "home place" in our hurried wake, we've left many the treasure that home once held. Think for a moment what home meant for you....

~Security...is it any coincidence that without a home we've become such an insecure people?

~Laughter...when was the last time you had that cleansing, healing laugh that long ago characterized your childhood? The Bible says, "*a merry heart (laughter) is medicine to your soul.*" No wonder we're all sicker now than when we were just children, at home.

~Belonging...wasn't it great when we were kids to have a family where we belonged? Our cousins may have all had your family's signature big ears, or crooked noses, but they were still ours! Every family has the infamous "Uncle Eddy", the strange goofy "kin" you were embarassed by as a boy, but you now miss as a man. It felt good to belong. Now we have to join a church and go to classes just to be a part of God's family. It was easier, and I think better, when we just belonged.

Home represented all of that; security, laughter, belonging...it represented all that and a whole lot more. Home represented love. It was where we learned what it meant to be loved and where we learned

**Run on...
Through that
cross He calls
us Home...
Run on!**





The Gospel is God calling us home. Our Father knows we are homeless here. Even if you live in a mansion with another house at the beach, or in the mountains. We are still homeless, “strangers in a strange land” scripture describes us. Wayfarers, sojourners, lost, wandering souls we are and we know it. We try to go home but Thomas Wolfe was right, you can’t go home again. You can’t fill your heart with all those things that once came easy as a child. Sin has corrupted us, broken us, caused us to forget the way back. The bridges behind us have been burned. We are all orphans because sin has separated us from our Father, and thus from home.

The wonderful, beautiful picture of redemption is how the Father allowed the Son to build a bridge with three rusty nails and a cross. Through that cross He calls us home. Even now, the Father watches and waits for our return. The parable of the prodigal (Luke 15) says the Father runs to that returning son. It is the only time in scripture God ever runs.

Jesus knew what home was like. He returned to the home He grew up in Capernium when He needed to touch and taste what had made His childhood so special. Jesus knew we’d need a home and all that makes such special when our life on this earth ends. So, He’s gone there to prepare a place for us, a Home. I can just imagine how amazing that Home will be. Amazing Grace didn’t just save a wretch like me...it even now prepares a Home for me.

No wonder when we’ve been there 10,000 years, been Home for ages upon eons, that we’ll still sing His praise as if we’ve just begun.

*I’m sittin’ in the railway station
Got a ticket for my destination
On a tour of one night stands
My suitcase and guitar in hand
And every stop is neatly planned
For a poet and a one man band*

*Homeward bound
I wish I was
Homeward bound
Home, where my thought’s escaping
Home, where my music’s playing
Home, where my love lies waiting
Silently for me*

*Everyday’s an endless stream
Of cigarettes and magazines
And each town looks the same to me
The movies and the factories
And every stranger’s face I see
Reminds me that I long to be*

*Homeward bound
I wish I was
Homeward bound
Home, where my thought’s escaping
Home, where my music’s playing
Home, where my love lies waiting
Silently for me*

*Tonight I’ll sing my songs again
I’ll play the game and pretend
But all my words come back to me
In shades of mediocrity
Like emptiness in harmony
I need someone to comfort me*

*Homeward bound
I wish I was
Homeward bound...*

(Simon and Garfunkle; Homeward Bound)

A big part of what we do at His Place and Hosanna Home is try to provide our residents with a HOME for the 12 months they’re in recovery with us. Our facilities are not made to resemble a prison or a mental institution. His Place is a home place. Hosanna Home is as lovely and homey as any facility of it’s type anywhere in the world. Our people are healed at HOME. They learn of a Father who loves them, not just in a classroom, but working and walking around our ministry homes, with men and women they come to know as parents. At His Place and Hosanna Home we pray, we sing, we have classes and counselling, but we also laugh (and sometimes cry), we play, we talk...We live and teach our people how to live like this life is a beautiful gift from Jesus. And the best is always yet to come.

