Kjersta Larson-Smith
Peace Lutheran, Seattle
March 6, 2013
John 14, 1-7

**Welcome Home**

18 days, 2 countries, 8 cities, 5 hotels, 37 restaurants, ruins of 2 ancient cities, 3 museums, 1 cathedral, 2 mosques, 4 open-air markets, 1 palace, 1 cistern, 2 beaches, 2 lost suitcases, 2 found suitcases, 1 relieved happy dance, countless miles of walking with our luggage on our backs, 4,937 photos, 1 food-borne illness, 4 ferries and 6 flights. That about sums up the trip that Dustin and I took to Greece and Turkey this past September. And let me tell you…on day 18 we couldn't *wait* to get home! There's just no place like home and your own bed!

We landed in SeaTac late at night and instantly had voicemails left by our parents, eager to hear we had made it home safely. When we got home, we found a loaf of fresh-baked zucchini bread on the counter from our dear friends, The Bernds, who suspected we would need breakfast the next day. Really, we arrived to our friends and family who were waiting with outstretched arms to welcome us home.

If heaven is like that, I can't wait! If we can feel so welcomed and so wanted in an imperfect world, what must heaven be like? This is what Jesus was trying to convey to his disciples in the Gospel lesson. Jesus was announcing that he must go away, but they were not to worry. He assured them that he was going to do some house remodeling and room additions for their heavenly occupancy. When he was completed, he would come and get them and welcome them to their eternal home.

Sometimes, though, getting home doesn't feel easy. On our last morning in Istanbul, we awoke to the sound of thunder and rain. We thought, "No big deal", got ready for long journey ahead and then waited for our shuttle to the airport. Two hours later, we were still waiting! You see the city was brought to a standstill by the rain, leaving the streets a gridlocked mess. After some frantic phone calls to a new taxi and the scariest cab ride of our lives, weaving in and out of traffic,

we finally made it to the airport - only our generous and cushy 3 hour window had shrunk down to 30 minutes. 30 minutes to make it through an initial security screening, check our bags, go through security #2, go through customs and then sprint down the terminal to our gate (without even bothering to put our shoes back on) and we made to the plane just in the nick of time. Whew. Well you guessed it, after boarding we just sat on the runway for an hour since the cities air traffic was as congested as the roads. And…our flight was delayed which led to a very tight connection in JFK and our second frantic airport sprint of the day.

Life can kind of feel that way sometimes, don't you think? Running around frantically while trying to balance all of our commitments: 40, 50 or 60 hr work weeks, countless appointments, grocery shopping, soccer games, piano lessons, church committee meetings, Sunday School… It's exhausting just thinking about it. But really, we don't have to do any of these things to find our way the home that Jesus has prepared. He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." So in reality, all we need to do is put our trust in Jesus and by God's Grace we will be welcomed, with an open and warm embrace into our eternal home.

Amen.