

HOME (Inspired by The Michael Bublé Song)

Week #3 of a 7-Week "Songs of Life" Series

Rev. Richard Maraj

Sunday, May 11, 2025

LYRICS to "Home"

*Another summer day
Has come and gone away
In Paris and Rome
But I wanna go home, mmm*

*Maybe surrounded by
A million people, I
Still feel all alone
I just wanna go home
Oh, I miss you, you know*

*And I've been keeping all the letters
That I wrote to you
Each one a line or two
"I'm fine baby, how are you?"
Well I would send them but I know
That it's just not enough
My words were cold and flat
And you deserve more than that*

*Another aeroplane
Another sunny place
I'm lucky I know
But I wanna go home
Mmm, I got to go home*

*Let me go home
I'm just too far
From where you are
I wanna come home*

*And I feel just like:
I'm living someone else's life
It's like I just stepped outside
When everything was going right
And I know just why you could not
Come along with me
That this was not your dream
But you always believed in me*

*Another winter day
Has come and gone away
In even Paris and Rome*

*And I wanna go home
Let me go home*

*And I'm surrounded by
A million people, I
I still feel alone
Oh, let me go home
Oh, I miss you, you know*

*Let me go home
I've had my run
Baby, I'm done
I gotta go home
Let me go home
It'll all be all right
I'll be home tonight
I'm coming back home*

MESSAGE

So, how many people like to travel a lot? And how many people have ever been on a long vacation or a road trip or a cruise or out of state visiting family and, regardless of how much fun you were having, you hit a place where you just wanted to go home. You couldn't wait to get home!

And so, what do you miss when you're away from home? I would suggest sometimes it's the familiarity of our surroundings. It's a routine; it's a structure. It might be our children or members of our family, it might be home cooking. For me, I always miss sleeping in my own bed.

And so, I want you to think, when you hear the word "home," what kind of thoughts, images, and ideas and feelings come to mind? For most of us, I think the concept of home triggers feelings of being safe and secure. You know, a place where we can rest and relax, unwind and just be ourselves. Home is a place where we feel loved and nurtured and comforted.

You know, we love the *feeling* of home so much that we infuse the word "home" into other words for other experiences that we like. Homemade; homegrown; home spun; home base; home game; home stretch; home run; home free; home boy; home body; home sick; homework. You know, you can go home; you can come home; you can leave home; you can stay home. Unity of Phoenix is our spiritual home. [Congregants applaud] Our home away from home. So please make yourself at home. You know, let's keep the home fires burning, because home is where the heart is. Home sweet home. There's no place like home. And you might think the lights are on, but nobody's home. [Congregants laugh] But I say go big or go home. You know, I can keep doing this until the cows come home. [Congregants laugh]

You might not like my shtick, but we love home. There is something incredible about the power of home

So today we are in Week #3 of our seven-week series of "The Songs of Life." You know one of the great blessings of my life is: I was born into a family of 10. I was number eight. And I got to hear all the music of the seven ones – the ones that were older than me -- and my parents. I literally grew up – because I grew up in Trinidad -- I had from classical to calypso, you know. From Bob Marley to the Beatles. I mean, I heard Johnny Mathis, Engelbert Humperdink, Andy Williams, Ricky Nelson, Elvis Presley ... you know, all the Motown tunes. Boz Skaggs. I mean, I could just go on and on and on. You know, I was blessed to be surrounded with great music.

Unfortunately, God blessed me with zero musical talent whatsoever. [Congregants laugh] So that's why I like the series. I get to take famous, fabulous music and joyfully infuse a spiritual message and extract from it, which is just a fun and wonderful experience.

In our first week, I did "Doctor My Eyes" by Jackson Brown. Last week, I did "Daydream" by The Lovin' Spoonful. And today: the 2005 hit by Michael Bublé called "Home."

Interestingly, that song hit number one on both the country and contemporary charts. And it was the first song that he ever wrote that was a hit, because he was just covering crooner songs. And this one he kind of stepped out of his comfort zone and just crushed it with this song.

It was inspired while he was on tour in Europe. And the song is about just yearning to be home. And it was a bittersweet feeling, because there he is living his dream. He's traveling from country to country. He's famous. He's doing what he loves and doing it so well.

And so, he shared this song with his music director, Alan Chang, who thought it was too negative. He said, "You can't be singing in Paris and Rome, and be singing about not being happy in Paris and Rome." And so, they set it aside for a while and didn't go back to it for several months, but finally did. And they were able to blend, you know, being grateful for this life he has, but also being honest about how alone and how lonely he felt, and how much he was missing home.

This song, not surprisingly was a number one hit, because it ... one, he's got a beautiful voice. It's so heartfelt. But it's relatable. Because I truly believe the feeling he sang about is a universal feeling: I just want to go home. I don't think there's anyone in the world that cannot relate to that feeling.

So, we're going to look this morning at some spiritual messages -- some life lessons -- that we glean from the song "Home."

The first thing is to **BUILD CONNECTION AND BELONGING**. Let's look at some of the lyrics:

*Another summer day
Has come and gone away
In Paris and Rome
But I wanna go home, mmm*

*Maybe surrounded by
A million people, I
Still feel all alone
I just wanna go home*

Last year the U.S. Surgeon General released a report that was very concerning about the deep sense of loneliness and isolation in this country. And it found that approximately 50% of adults in the U.S. feel lonely and alone regularly ... and some the majority of the time. It also found that all of us, in general, are spending less and less time in the physical presence with one another. It also found that Generation Z -- which is people born in the mid-90s to 2010 -- have 73% of their population feeling loneliness. And, in fact, that generation is being deemed as the loneliest generation in history.

And I would say the main reason is: social media -- how distracting it is. How it is we have increased screen time. And they call this a dopamine hit, where the notifications -- like Pavlov and the dog and the ringing of the bell -- starts elevating. It's like it starts drawing our attention. We get a little hit of excitement from it, and spend more time doing that than other ways of actually connecting with folks.

I mean, we may have thousands of Facebook friends and followers, and watch all kinds of videos and podcasts, and watch and see what pictures of people they had for lunch ... [Congregants laugh] But we have less and less face-to-face contact. We may have virtual connections, but we're not having personal, and particularly emotional, connections with others.

I saw an ad and it had a picture of a family around a dining table all looking at their devices. And the caption was, *"Being alone together."* And it really speaks a lot about our attention and our lack of connection with one another.

So, according to that study, half the people in this room are feeling loneliness on a regular basis. And three-quarters of those in the Generation Z are feeling it, as well. And to me, it is just sad and unfortunate that this loneliness is going on. People feeling like, *"Hey, I don't have a friend"* or, *"I don't have very many friends. I don't want anyone to call; anyone to be there for me; anyone to hang out; anyone to talk to or go to a movie with."*

And the interesting thing is that, as we grow as adults, we have fewer and fewer friends. Because as the life dynamics change -- and people move away or divorces happen or all kinds of those situations that relationships end -- but we don't replenish them. Because it takes time. It takes effort. And we aren't always willing to put that effort to build new friends in our adult years. So, we almost choose to have fewer and fewer friends and less and less authentic connection.

And to add insult into injury, this social isolation and loneliness harms our health. It affects us in terms of greater levels of depression, cardiovascular disease, dementia. And early death increases by 29%. They said that isolation is the health equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day! Now, I have no idea how you calculate that into 15 cigarettes a day, but I would say it's concerning, because we're not supposed to live that way.

In the book of Genesis, Chapter 2, Verse 18, it said, *"It is not good for man to be alone."* Brené Brown says, *"We are hardwired for connection. It is connection and belonging that gives our lives purpose and meaning."* You know, psychologist Abraham Maslow placed love, connection and belonging as a foundation of human *need* ... you know, right after food and safety.

I mean, without connection -- without being involved in relationship with others -- our soul starves. We're meant to be in relationship. We're meant to have friends. We're meant to be in community and to feel that connection. And the reality is: we *are* connected. We are all children of God. We're all brothers and sisters. And yet, we are afraid to make new friends. You know, we're afraid to have closer social connection. And in my opinion, it is important for all of us to work on building connection and community.

How many people would like to have a new friend; a few new friends who expand your social network? Anybody? And how many people find it hard to meet and make new friends? Anybody? You know, these conditions we have are not easy. However, the good news is: we are all powerful spiritual beings. We are creators. We are manifesters. We have the power of vision. We have the power of intention. You know, we have the power of action. We can call forth, affirm, and claim our good and transform our lives.

Here's four ways we can do it. Number one is: **just have an intention**. An intention to make new friends and connections and expand our social circle. That has been one of my intentions for this year.

Second one is: **plan**. You know, join some groups. There are all kinds of meet-up groups and dating sites. You can join a pickleball group or Bunco or hiking or take a cooking class. I mean, there are all kinds of ways that we can join into activities. I've joined two of them myself: a dinner club and another one.

The third one is: you've got to **risk and reach out**. You can go to these things, but you've got to say, "Hello." You've got to introduce yourself. You've got to ask a question.

How many people would say that you're an introvert? How many say you're shy? Now, most people don't ever believe this, but I'm an introvert. I'm an outgoing introvert, but I'm an introvert. So meaning, in a group of strangers, I'm actually shy. You know, I'm a little nervous about making connections and reaching out. But the fact is: we need it to take a risk. We need to put it out there. You know, we need to allow ourselves to be known. Because I'll bet many of us have a fear of rejection. That's why we don't want to put it out there. We don't want to embarrass ourselves. So we stay to ourselves. But you've got to take a risk. You've got to be willing to reach out. You got to go out on a limb. Somebody once said you got to go on a limb because that's where the fruit is. If we want this, we have to risk ourselves.

I took a risk last week. I bought a club sandwich and I'm not even a member. [Congregants laugh]

Hey, I took a risk with that joke, and I put it in. It didn't work, but I risked it. [Congregants laugh]

And the fourth one is: you've got to be vulnerable. You got to go deeper than just saying, "Hello." You've got to be willing to share a part of yourselves. You've got to be willing to allow yourself to be known. Because it's not just a matter of having company; it's not a matter of being in a large room of people. It's you have to open your heart and open yourself and share in a vulnerable way so you can be known. So you can develop friendships and connection.

Loneliness is an epidemic. I mean, it is unreal. But the good news is: we have the cure if we are willing to risk, if we are willing to put it out there, if we're willing to be vulnerable. And so, the first thing we learned from this song, to me, is the importance to build connection and community, because loneliness is not the way we're meant to live.

The second thing we learn is to **APPRECIATE YOUR LOVED ONES**. So back to the lyrics:

***And I've been keeping all the letters
That I wrote to you
Each one a line or two
"I'm fine baby, how are you?"
Well I would send them but I know
That it's just not enough
My words were cold and flat
And you deserve more than that***

You know, success -- as much as we could have -- isn't anything if we're lonely and have no one to share it with. Or have someone to share it and don't really fully share and engage them in that process. That is an empty success. And we deserve more than that, and our loved ones deserve more than that.

Let me give you an example, Scripturally, of the point I'm trying to make. 1 Corinthians 13:

"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and have faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all my possessions to the poor and give over my body to the flames that I may boast, but have not love, I gain nothing."

Basically, that Scripture and the message is: all the success in the world means nothing if we don't have someone to share it with, or others to share it with. You know, when there's love, the world is brighter. You know, we feel stronger and more confident. We feel happier. You know, we're willing to put ourselves out there more. You know, our successes are enhanced; our lives are enriched. When we have love, even going through an adversity is lightened because we have each other to lean on. And we can

still find joy, even in adversity. You know, I read many years ago that when someone is going through recovery, if they have someone they know that is there for them – that believes in them, that loves them, that supports them -- they have a 30 % better chance of continuing to move through recovery.

And it's interesting, [the singer] wrote in this -- these letters -- he said, "*You know, I'm fine; how are you?*" And he's saying he doesn't want to mail them, because he knows that's not enough. And it's not | He's in Europe having the time of his life fulfilling his dream; she's back there and it's like, "*How are you? That's the best you've got is 'How are you'?!?!?*"

In my opinion, he's saying, "*Hey, you really matter to me. You make a difference in my life. You're important. I value you and appreciate you.*" You know, I think saying, "*I love you*" is good, but sometimes I think we need to expand into greater details. To say, "*You really matter to me. You make my life better and I really appreciate when you do this or when you do that.*" To me, that is going deeper and appreciating the ones that we love and sharing ourselves our lives and our success with them.

So, who in your life deserves more of your love? Of your attention? Of your time? And especially of your appreciation? Who in your life is it important for you to say that, "*You really matter to me; you really make a difference to me*"? And share it face-to-face and express it to them

You know, a practice and a challenge for all of us: every day, express your appreciation for someone. And it could be your spouse, your partner, your children. It could be someone at work. It could be even the cashier at Fry's. Whoever it is, express appreciation. Sometimes we take people for granted; take life for granted. And we really need to begin to express that love, especially in the form of appreciation and being thankful for others. No one should feel lonely, unloved, or unappreciated, and we have to power the ability to do it if we're willing to do it and share it.

The next thing this song inspired in me is to **REMEMBER GOD IS OUR HOME**. The lyric says:

***Let me go home
I'm just too far
From where you are
I wanna come home***

How many people have ever felt distant or disconnected from God? Anybody ever feel that? You know, we all do. Sometimes we can't find and feel God. Sometimes we can't find and feel peace. Sometimes we can't find and feel the clarity or guidance that we're looking for.

You know, the biggest illusion is that home is "out there." That success and happiness is "out there," and we've got to go out there and get that. And we're always chasing power or money or all these different things that are going to get us to that place.

Thich Nhat Hanh says, "*You do not need to travel anywhere to find peace. The home you are looking for is inside of you.*" Jesus put it this way: "*The kingdom of God is within you.*" In *A Course of Miracles*, it says, "*There is a place in you where nothing is impossible. You are at home there.*"

You know, the fact is: home is when we come to realize that God is our source. God is our foundation. That God is our home.

"God is my source."

Together: [with congregants] *"God is my source."* Take a deep breath.

"God is my foundation."

Together: [with congregants] *"God is my foundation."* Deep breath.

"God is my home."

Together: *"God is my home."* Deep breath.

You know, this idea is captured beautifully by Hannah More Kohaus in her "Prayer of Faith." The idea behind it feels like the truth: God is our source. Here's what it says:

*God is my help in every need.
God does my every hunger feed.
God walks beside me, guides my way
Through every moment of this day.*

*I now am wise, I now am true,
patient, kind and loving, too.
All things I am, can do, and be
Through Christ the Truth that is in me.*

*God is my health; I can't be sick.
God is my strength, unfailing, quick.
God is my all; I know no fear
Since God and truth and love are here.*

"God is my source."

Together: [with congregants] *"God is my source."*

"God is my foundation."

Together: [with congregants] *"God is my foundation."*

"God is my home."

Together: *"God is my home."*

And the last one is about **BEING TRUE TO OURSELVES**. I saw a quote that says, *"Sometimes we run from others, but sometimes we run from ourselves."* Evern have a time where you didn't feel comfortable in your own skin? There are many years I did not feel comfortable in my own skin. I didn't like myself; didn't like how I looked and how my life was. I wished I was someone else; wished I looked different.

I think we have times where we don't honor ourselves. We don't trust ourselves. Sometimes we don't even know ourselves. And we live our lives dictated by what other people think and other people's expectations.

How many people have ever done something that somebody wanted or expected you to please them? And you did it when it was not what you wanted to do? Anybody have that? And I think coming home means to be who you really are and to truly be yourself. To be who yourself without any mask, without pretending, without any roles. To live who you are, who you came to be, and live that truth authentically.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, *"To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment."* Shakespeare said it this way: *"To thine own self be true."* When you are true to yourself, you're honoring God; you're honoring yourself; and, quite frankly, you're honoring all the people in your life.

So where in your life are you not being true to yourself? And where in your life are you being called to actually honor who you are and live your truth?

When God created Adam and Eve he said, *"I have two gifts."*

First, I just want to say: I need your forgiveness before I tell this joke ... and you'll understand why in a minute.

When God created Adam and Eve, He said, *"I have two gifts. One is the art of peeing standing up."*

Adam's eyes widened. He said, *"Me! Me! Pick me, God, please! That'll make my life easier and so much fun. I want that gift!"*

Eve said, *"Well, it doesn't really matter to me; so, Adam, you can have that gift."*

Adam shouted for joy, and he ran into the Garden of Eden watering the trees and the bushes. [Congregants laugh] And he ran to the beach and started spelling words in the sand. He was just showing off. He was so excited about his gift; he was happy as can be.

And Eve leaned over to God and said, *"God, what was the second gift?"*

And God said, *"It's a brain, Eve, and it's just for you."* [Congregants laugh and whoop]

I'm forgiven; thank you.

You know, it is sad, and it is heartbreaking that this incredible country we live in -- in this world -- that so many of us feel alone and are experiencing loneliness and isolation. It is sad that so many of us are afraid to share our gratitude and withhold our love and all the positive things we could say for the people in our lives.

But the good news is we can change that ... but we must be willing to take action, take risks, and be vulnerable. I would say church is the perfect place to build connection and a sense of belonging with like-minded people. Church is the perfect place to nurture our relationship and awareness in knowing that God is our home. And it is the perfect place to learn to be true to ourselves.

Let love be the place you return to. Let connection be the path you walk. Let appreciation be the gift you share. And let home be the sanctuary you remember you never left.

This is the message and these are the life lessons from the song, "Home."

God bless you all.