

Coming Home

JANET G. LEE

You cannot imagine how happy I am to be here with you. Rex and I both feel that we have come “home”—that this is where we belong. It is about feeling at home and belonging that I would like to speak today.

Throughout your lives, you will probably live in many homes. I have lived in twenty. However, I will tell you about only three of them—the places I lived during my four years at BYU. My memories of that period of time were awakened by an experience I had Friday morning as I jogged with Rex across parts of this campus.

It was a beautiful, crisp morning, with the sun just peeking over the mountains. I was full of energy and determined to run past three destinations—my BYU student homes: Heritage Halls, Knight Mangum Hall, and an apartment on 800 East, just a block or so from Alexander’s Print Shop, which was, for years, a popular snack shop called Rowley’s.

My run down memory lane was in reverse of the chronological order I just listed. Passing the site of the apartment where Rex and I lived as newlyweds, I was saddened to see that it had been torn down to make way for a condominium. Nevertheless, my nostalgia was undaunted. Dozens of feelings flooded over

me as I remembered what it felt like to worry about getting good grades, writing papers, preparing dinners on a very small budget, and helping Rex decide to which law schools he should apply.

At that point in our run, Rex had to leave me to attend an early morning meeting, so I continued alone. A short distance from where our apartment had been, I came to the old Knight Mangum Hall, known to you as the math lab, which was my home for two years. It seemed such a short time ago that Rex picked me up there for our very first date. (I can remember thinking that it would also be our last, but that is another story for a different talk.)

Now I was running slightly uphill, and as I approached Heritage Halls, I watched students rushing, almost frantically, to get to their eight o’clock classes on time. For some reason, watching you at that moment unlocked the floodgates for me. All of my emotions came pouring out; I could remember just how it felt to be a student during those first weeks

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of school. I could remember feelings of apprehension, inadequacy, frustration, and homesickness, mixed with feelings of excitement, anticipation, eagerness, and joy. You see, I was a freshman when I lived at Heritage Halls.

As I passed by Elsie Carroll Hall, my eyes swelled with warm tears. I could remember trying to adjust to roommates, attempting to manage my time, forcing myself to study in between classes instead of staying up late at night, and worrying about whether I would have dates on weekends.

Thinking about all of this filled me with a strong desire to stop and hug you in your rush to class—to share some of my thoughts with you and maybe offer a little advice. Can you imagine how you would have felt if this tearful, middle-aged woman in sweats and running shoes had done just that?

I resisted the urge, but today, now that I have showered, dried my tears, and am standing here with your full attention, I am going to tell you what I would have said then about home and belonging.

In your quest to complete each semester, to get that degree, to find that perfect someone to love, to prepare for whatever is ahead, savor the rightness of this time in your life. Do what is right for you now, feel at home and at peace along the path in your struggle to get where you are going.

At times in my life I have spent too much time longing for things I did not have. I wonder what it was I was homesick for as a freshman. Was it my house or my backyard patio? Was it my comfortable bed or my very own closet? Was it my friends and family? I was probably missing all of these things, but what has taken me some time to realize is that my longing was for the comfort that comes from being in the right place at the right time, of knowing that I am where my Father in Heaven wants me to be.

Our physical surroundings change many times in our lifetimes, and with each change comes a feeling of being off balance until we find our way again—until we feel at home with our new surroundings. If we are listening to the Spirit, we will surround ourselves with truth and goodness in each of our earthly homes, making the pathway to our ultimate heavenly home more direct and attainable.

In section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verses 46 and 47, the Lord promises:

And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.

And everyone that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father.

Why is it so important for us to feel at home with that which is good and right? Our most important pursuit in this life is to live so that we may return to our heavenly home, to once again live with our Heavenly Father. President Spencer W. Kimball told us that our first responsibility in this mortal life is to prepare to meet God.

Why is it that we have warm feelings of “home” when we are in the right place at the right time? Perhaps this can best be explained by one of my favorite quotes from C. S. Lewis in *Weight of Glory*. He wrote, “If we are made in Heaven, the desire for our proper place will be already in us.”

Rex and I feel once again that we have come home. This is not what we had planned, and for the first time in my life a drastic change has not been accompanied by a major move to a faraway place. Thank goodness we will not be moving to home number twenty-one. However, this could possibly be the most important change of our lives. And once again, as during my days in Carroll Hall, Knight Mangum, or on 800 East—and so many times

between then and now—it is important to feel at home in the sense we have been talking about: that what we are doing is right. And I know it *is* right. Not planned, nor anticipated, but right.

Soon after Rex was asked to be president of BYU, we attended our first eighteen-stake fire-side, where we were invited to sit on the stand. As I sat there looking out at the thousands of students before us, the most overwhelming feeling of peace came over me. It seemed to whisper, “This is where you should be. This is where your Father in Heaven wants you to be.” All of my doubts fled. I knew Rex felt this, too, as he reached over and took my hand, and in

the silent language of soul mates, our hearts were one.

At that very moment I wished that each one of you could feel what we were feeling, that in the rightness of your own moment in time you would feel the reassuring whisperings of the Spirit, that *your* spirit would feel that you had come “home” to do what you were meant to do.

It is my prayer that we will all strive to be in the right place at the right time, that we will live in harmony with the Spirit, which will take us step by step back to our ultimate home with our Heavenly Father. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.