



January 2010—*Longing For Home*

Somewhere deep within each of us is a desire, a longing for a world very different from our own. It is there first of all because we have been created in the image of God and were intended to live with him in a world of love. Though his image has been defaced by the fall, there are still remnants of it within us. The stunning beauty of a sunset, the awe of starry heavens, a deeply moving story or poem, can arouse within us for a brief moment an awareness and desire for our true home. This is even stronger once we have been born of the Spirit, for God plants eternity in our hearts. C.S. Lewis explores this with profound insight:

In speaking of this desire for our own far-off country, which we find in ourselves even now, I feel a certain shyness. I am almost committing an indecency. I am trying to rip open the inconsolable secret in each one of you—the secret which hurts so much that you take your revenge on it by calling it names like Nostalgia and Romanticism and Adolescence; the secret also which pierces with such sweetness that when, in very intimate conversation, the mention of it becomes imminent, we grow awkward and affect to laugh at ourselves; the secret we cannot hide and cannot tell, though we desire to do both. We cannot tell it because it is a desire for something that has never actually appeared in our experience. We cannot hide it because our experience is constantly suggesting it, and we betray ourselves like lovers at the mention of a name. Our commonest expedient is to call it beauty and behave as if that had settled the matter. . . . The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not in them, it only came through them, and what came through them was longing. These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself, they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited. Do you think I am trying to weave a spell? Perhaps I am; but remember your fairy tales. Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as for inducing them.

Today, many of us are under the spell of modernity, post-modernity, or other worldly philosophies which in their own way distort and suppress the knowledge of God and the deepest longings of the human heart. Breaking free of their enchantment can only come from opening ourselves to God in a new way and asking him to draw us into a deeper fellowship with his Spirit, to renew our minds and to restore his image in us—a prayer he is most willing to answer.

Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

HEBREWS 11:16 (NIV)

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1966), pp. 4-5.