

January 26, Epiphany 3C (Luke 4:14-21)

When Jesus steps up to read the scroll, he comes home to a place of clarity.

by [Charisse R. Tucker](#) in the [January 2025](#) issue

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I remember the moment so clearly. I was standing in the lobby of my dormitory my freshman year in college, on the pay phone, waiting for my mom to pick up. The voice of the overly confident, newly launched young adult who was ready to take on the world had been replaced by a much younger and smaller voice who I had not heard from since my elementary school days. “Mom, can I come home? I want to come home.”

She wired me money to catch the train, and I went home for the weekend. I attended school about two hours away, which made planned trips for holidays and semester breaks doable for my mother, a single parent. But this was not a trip that had been planned. The grown-up world became louder and more disorienting than I anticipated, and my anxiety-stoked fear caught me in the midst of a stressful moment. The only thing I could think to do was to get to the place of my upbringing, the primary place of my formation, the place of familiar complexity, the place I called home.

It was a quick trip filled with ordinary activities: sleeping in my own bed, tastes of familiar foods, conversations with friends and loved ones who knew the shape of my humor and sound of my laughter, and the feel of rooms, spaces, and hearts that understood me. Less than 72 hours later I returned to campus. I was not completely convinced that I was ready to take the world back on, but I was grounded enough in and by the place of my beginning that it gave me the space and courage to take my next step. Home helped me to settle down just long enough to get a clearer perspective.

Home can do that for us. Sometimes home can stop the world from spinning just long enough to help us fix our gaze on the way forward. It can ground us in the real

of life and help us to tell the truth, at least to ourselves. Home can reconnect our minds and bodies in ways that reenergize the parts of us that have become numb by stagnation or disappointment. Home and the faces and memories that we encounter there can help us to remember who we used to be so that we can gain some insight about who we are in the moment—and who we are becoming. And sometimes home, in its contradictions and hard truths, can remind us that the most significant journey home we can take is the one that brings us home within.

Maybe this is some of what Jesus experiences as he begins his ministry. The word of his homecoming has gotten around enough to cause a significant buzz, and as he enters the town of his formative years, fresh from his encounter in the wilderness, the excitement of his return spreads. The people remember him in the way that hometown folk do. I imagine that some of their memories are more fable than fact, but as with many homecomings the pride they feel probably outweighs their need to verify the details. Jesus is back home, and as he takes to the familiar places he does the ordinary things that one does in his hometown. He is grounded in his unfolding. He is home among the people, even though there will come a time when the people around him will no longer claim him.

Sometimes home is a place. Sometimes home is a people. Sometimes home has no walls or rooms but holds dreams and imaginings of who we are becoming. For Jesus, as he steps up to read the scroll, home becomes a place of clarity. It isn't just that he sees the people; he sees himself. And he has the courage and conviction to make what he sees clear as he utters the words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." When we come home and come home to ourselves, we can see things as they are, for better or worse. For Jesus this means seeing his mission, his community, and even the ways that he no longer follows the expected script of the place from which he came. For us maybe it is allowing what we see in our family, our community, or maybe our country to affect us in ways that bring forth clarity and care and transformation.

Twenty years ago I moved back to the city of my birth. I moved back home. And though I was much different than the young adult who called her mother to send her train money, the roots of my identity still bore the imprint of my upbringing. But this time I stood in the midst of some of the people in the church community that formed me as a woman and a minister. They would need to determine if I possessed enough of the familiar to still be considered one of their own, and I needed to decide if who I had become still required or wanted their welcome. We found a way to meet

somewhere in the middle, and I am thankful for the homecoming that revealed itself during that time.