

"JESUS DIDN'T COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS"

Luke 2:1-7

We started playing Christmas music right after Thanksgiving. I have some of the newer music but I always seem to go back to the ones I grew up listening to, such as, and you younger people hang in there with me:

"The Christmas Song" by Nat King Cole; "White Christmas" sung by Bing Crosby; and how about "I'll Be Home For Christmas" that was also sung by Bing. "I'll be home for Christmas you can count on me. Please have snow and mistletoe and presents on the tree. Christmas Eve will find me where the love light gleams. I'll be home for Christmas If only in my dreams."

For as long as my mother was alive we always, I mean we always made our way back to 419 Dawson Ave., Bellevue, Pennsylvania for Christmas, that is, until we began having a family and then Mom and Dad would come to us. But being home for Christmas was sort of this unwritten rule because being with family was so important and especially at this special season of the year.

For all my earlier, growing up years the tradition was to go to church as a family to the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, then make your way home to spend the rest of the evening wrapping presents and then waking up on Christmas morning to hurry down the stairs to open up gifts, only, only after Uncle Tom and Aunt Joe had arrived to be there to greet us in the living room. And then we had the big Christmas ham dinner later that day.

Maybe you have some Christmas traditions you follow. Of course we always prayed for a little snow for Christmas Eve, not a lot, just enough for it to truly be a "White Christmas." I mean, Christmas without snow is like water skiing without the water, right? Let me ask you, how in heaven's name do people in Texas or Florida celebrate Christmas without snow?

Being home for Christmas, being with people that are special; visiting places that we enjoy during the holidays is important to a lot of people- and this goes for Christians and even non-Christians.

That is why my prayers, our prayers should be lifted up for those who are alone during the Christmas season; for those who, for one reason or another, are not able to be with family or friends due to not having the money to get home or can't get off from work other than Christmas Day; or those whom no one thought of inviting over and only have 4 walls to stare at on Christmas Day; for the service men and women who are separated by miles from loved ones and friends and cannot physically be home for Christmas.

I have just two points I want to share with you today that revolve around leaving home- first, **Jesus Left Home at Christmas**. I guess when Christmas time comes each year I don't think about the fact that, in order for you and me to celebrate the Christ child coming into this world, into our hearts, into our homes, well, then, Jesus willingly gave up His right to stay in His glorious heavenly home. Here we have this virgin girl, Mary, probably no older than 12 or 13, conceiving a child by the Holy Spirit, the Christ Child,

who gives birth in a lowly stable in Bethlehem. Our passage tells us in verse 5 that he, meaning Joseph, "went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son...." This firstborn son was the Son of the most-high God who was both God and man and left the heavenly realm; He left that which was most familiar- heaven, and He came to this earth to experience many of the same things we experience. And He also experienced subordination, suffering, shame, persecution and death.

Think about what Jesus gave up to come to earth. First, **He gave up His Throne of Glory**. We read in Matthew 25:31 that He left His "throne of glory" that must have been out of this world, no pun intended. We get a glimpse of this glory when we read in the book of Revelation, Revelation 21:18-21 that tells us of a place unlike any other- a place where there is light and no oppressive sun; a place that is so magnificent that it is as if the

streets are paved with gold. Think about how difficult it must have been for Jesus to leave.

Second, **He gave up the holy for the unholy**. Listen again to the words from the familiar hymn, *Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus*, for we sing, "Come, thou long-expected Jesus, Born to set Thy people free; From our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in Thee." When we sing those words we ask God to free us from our fears and sins, why? Because this is a tarnished, stained, broken, sinful world. Just look around; just read the paper or turn on the TV. The perfect Jesus came and rubbed up against the imperfect. I don't know about you but Jesus' coming to this earth is hard for me to understand. And yet He did in order to redeem this world unto Himself.

Third, **holy Jesus became human**. Yes, He was both 100% God and 100% man but He was man, He was human. He became one of us for He is Emmanuel, which means "God with us."

And by the time He grew up physically and spiritually He came to know where His home was, for we read in Luke 2:41 and following that when he was 12 years of age, a preteen, He and His parents had gone to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And He got separated from His parents and they came searching for Him and found Him in the Temple. They questioned Him. Didn't they know He should be there, He asked them? He had been in His Father's house that day; He was "home." But then, for the next 20 years, Jesus of Nazareth was homesick.

Have you ever been homesick? Maybe you stayed over at a friend's house and it was the first time you were away from your parents; maybe you went away to church camp for a week and that first night you cried yourself to sleep; maybe you were far away at college or serving in the military and couldn't get home for the holidays. Jesus could probably relate to us but think about this- in many ways His homesickness was different from any type of homesickness we might have experienced.

For Jesus was separated from His heavenly Father. It wasn't as if Jesus did not have fellowship with God, for there were many times He went to prayer, but He was separated from God.

Thinking what Jesus left behind should cause us to weep. And His "homesickness" had to have been greater than anything we can ever experience or even imagine. Not to mention the fact that He came and suffered and died for your sins and for my sins. He came to save us; He came to redeem the world. And when He went to the cross for us, when He hung there and suffered that agonizing and brutal death, when He cried out from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" there are those Biblical scholars who believe that at that moment, The Heavenly Father actually had to look away from His only Son because the sins of the world that Jesus took upon Himself was so intense. Yes, Jesus left home at Christmas time to be one with us- Emmanuel.

And the second thing I want to share today is that **For the Believer,**

Our Home Is Not Of This World. When we think about the fact that Jesus left the realms of glory to bring to us salvation, in that salvation He is **ESCOURTING** us to His realms of glory. For a brief time, Jesus was homesick. For a period of time, He had to live under the authority of His earthly parents- Joseph and Mary; for a time He had to live in obedience to the Law; and while He was on this earth He had to subordinate Himself to the will of His Heavenly Father. We read in Philippians 2:5-8 these words from the Apostle Paul where he writes, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, whom though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross." And so for Jesus, this time of active obedience was not easy, it was difficult, but it was oh, so necessary.

We read in scripture that we are to follow the example of Jesus; that we are to emulate our lives after Him. Can we be perfect like Him?

Absolutely not. But we are to try and be Christ-like and follow His example.

We read in the Hebrews 12:1-2 these words of challenge, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith." Jesus is the "Pioneer" of our salvation, for He is the one who blazed the trail ahead of us. And so, as we are united with Jesus, we can, all of a sudden, find ourselves like Him, homesick for our "real" home. This is what I mean when I said that Jesus is ESCOURTING us to His realms of glory and it is a life-long process that only is completed when we die. While it is true, not a one of us left any realms of glory for us to be born. But when we welcome Jesus into our lives, when we say YES to Jesus Christ, we are born anew, we become heirs to a new citizenship and we have

a new homeland. We become pilgrims on this earth; we are like Abraham, looking for the city with streets of gold. We now have our eyes looking to heaven. Friends, for the believer in Christ this earth is not our permanent home for we are but just passing through on our way to our permanent place with God.

One day when George MacDonald, the great Scottish preacher and writer, was talking with his son, the conversation turned to heaven and the prophets' version of the end of all things. "It seems too good to be true," the son said at one point. A smile crossed MacDonald's whiskered face. "Nay," he replied, "It is just so good it must be true!"

The other day I received the December publication, *The Voice of the Martyrs*, from a ministry that has served alongside the persecuted church in missions in more than 50 countries through its own international Christian Association of mission offices since 1967. This organization encourages and empowers Christians to fulfill the Great Commission in areas of the world

where they are persecuted for their involvement in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The director of the organization, John White wrote this in his article entitled, *Home for Christmas*, (quote) "Our founder, Richard Wurmbrand, was violently taken away from his earthly home and family for 14 years and imprisoned in Romania. Even so, the world was greatly blessed by his sacrifice. We at The Voice of the Martyrs know your prayers, letters to prisons, donations and filled Action Packs are sacrificial actions in our comfortable world. Satan sees us as a threat in the war between kingdoms when we refuse to admit this world is our home, the grave will not hold us. A lonely or sacrificial Christmas for us or for those we serve is simply the act of following a savior whose own family had to sneak out of town on a donkey ahead of a murdering government [the fleeing from King Herod]. We do not remain grieving for Jesus, who with his family was forced out of Bethlehem, hid in Egypt and returned to live in Nazareth. We do not have unreasonable pity for Jesus, who in his early 30s was killed in

Jerusalem because we know the beginning and the end of this story. We know that he has returned to his ever-increasing family. The family of Jesus was told there was no comfortable home for them, no room at the inn. The largest church in the world today, the Chinese unregistered church, or 'house church,' is told the same by a Communist government. The little girls on the cover are part of a rural house church family. They read about the family of Jesus who was rejected by a hostile world like they are... Our persecuted brothers and sisters cling to the hope of Christ and to us, their Christian family, understanding our true 'home' is never destroyed." (end quote)

Friends, Jesus didn't come home for Christmas but rather came to this foreign land known as earth and for the believer in Jesus this earth is not our true home. Maybe, like Jesus, we too should be homesick for heaven. For then the real joy of living will begin where there is no pain or suffering or sorrow. We will be with Jesus; we will be home at last. May the One who

came in the darkness of the night, Jesus Christ, minister to each of you this Christmas, and may the love of Christ sustain you all your days until we are home, really home. That is our hope; that is our promise. Amen.

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Introduction: Playing Christmas music right after Thanksgiving

Being home for Christmas...

Two points that revolve around leaving home:

First, _____ **Left Home at Christmas**

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First, **He gave up His throne of _____** Matt. 25:31

Rev. 21:18-21

Luke 2:41

Have you ever been homesick?

Second, **He gave up the holy for the _____**

Third, **holy Jesus became _____**
Emmanuel means "God _____ us"

Second, **for the Believer, our _____ is not of this world**

Jesus left the realms of glory to bring us salvation- in that salvation he is ESCOURTING us to His realms of glory

Jesus is the "Pioneer" of our salvation

We are heirs to a new citizenship, we have a new homeland

Conclusion: May the One who came in the darkness of the night, Jesus Christ, minister to each of you this Christmas, and may the love of Christ sustain you all your days until we are home, really home.