

Christmas Eve – Luke 2:14-15

“Are you going home for Christmas?” a pastor asked a university student who had joined his campus bible study. “Oops! What did I say wrong?” he thought as the young woman, burst into tears. She said how she didn’t really have a home to go back to. Her parents divorced when she was ten years old. Now, ten years later, each parent had remarried twice. If you define home as “the place where, if you have to go there, they have to take you in,” that woman wasn’t sure if or where her home was, or who would take her in that cold December evening. Are you home for Christmas?

We sing, “Oh, there’s no place like home for the holidays, for no matter how far away you roam, if you want to be happy in a million ways, for the holidays you can’t be home sweet home.” But let’s realize that wherever you may roam, this world is not your permanent home. No matter how merry the gathering at your family home, you can’t stay there forever! Tonight however, **“Let’s Really Go Home for Christmas”** as in spirit we go to Bethlehem and find our way home forever!

Bethlehem was Jesus’ first earthly home. The Son of God was born of the Virgin Mary in deepest humility, setting aside the full use of His divine glory when He became man. At the age of 30 entered His public ministry, teaching of God’s love and mercy, proclaiming He had come to give His life as a ransom payment for our sins, and performing miracles to prove He is true God. For a short time His followers thought His cause was lost as He hung on the accursed tree on Calvary, dying at the age of 33, long before his time, so they thought. But He was to fulfill His divine task *by dying*. And when He rose the third day and 40 days later ascended to heavenly glory, they were sure -- and *we* too -- that He is God-with-us, Immanuel, Christ the eternal King.

“To you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord,” we hear the angel’s good news. We cannot undo our yesterdays, the sins we have committed against God and others, or the good we failed to do. A lifetime of tears and regret cannot remove our guilt and shame. However, Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He kept God’s law of love perfectly, and His life counts for you! He fully paid the penalty and punishment for our sins when He suffered and died on the cross. He rose from the dead and prepares a home in heaven for you!

There is no evil worse than a troubled conscience. We may try to deaden our sensitivity to it with a crowded schedule. Without peace with God, we roam restlessly, for even in life we are in death. The Bible rings true - the wages of sin is death. But when we go to Bethlehem at Christmas, we learn Jesus is the Way to heaven! Through Him we can go home forever!

To you is born a Savior, Christ the Lord! Jesus rules still today, not by an act of congress or campaigning on some politically correct platform. He rules through His gospel promises, and His rule brings peace, hope, joy, and love to all who believe. Even though we fail to understand why certain events and tragedies come into our lives, His almighty hands weave the pattern of our lives so that all things work out for the good of those who love Him. Amid life’s uncertainties, when we kneel at the manger we can confidently believe that *we* shall not perish but have everlasting life. Loved ones, friends, jobs, and fortunes may be lost within moments. However, no one and nothing can separate us from God’s love in Christ.

Of course, if there were no room for Him in the inn of your heart, your faith in him would ultimately die. But when you continue to grow in His grace and knowledge by hearing and learning His Word weekly in worship and Bible study, and daily in your home devotions, He will reign in your heart now. You will worship Him as your King for time and for eternity.

In Christmas faith, let's honor Christ our Savior and King as we sing hymn 67 v. 1-2, "What Child is This?"

I saw a bumper sticker, "I'm not a victim of insanity. I'm enjoying it!" Aren't we as a society losing our very grasp on reality? We live in a world that has "gone mad." There is no absolute truth. Do whatever feels good for you at the moment. As people live this insane lifestyle, our headlines cry out the stories of crime, robbery, rape, and murder. Corporate corruption and moral decay is evident everywhere, and we're afraid to call it evil. Without faith in Christ, the entire universe seems an absurd tragedy. Perhaps the bumper sticker should have read, "We're all victims of insanity; and we're sick and tired of it!"

I saw another bumper sticker. "Christ has changed my life." Is it really true? Can this child born 2,000 years ago change my life forever? Let me tell you the story of Curtis Bradford. At Christmas when he was 7, he had a hard time waiting until his parents' snoring assured him they were asleep. Then about 2 a.m. he crept downstairs. There under the tree were his presents. He opened them as quietly as a 7-year old boy can. Wow -- a cowboy outfit, a pair of six-shooters, a puppet. Filled with excitement, he started playing with his new treasures, until he turned and saw his Dad frowning down at him. For a fleeting moment, he was afraid, but his fear vanished when his dad broke into a smile and settled into the recliner. Curtis showed him everything. "This is how the six-shooters works. Bang! Bang! Look, Daddy how the puppet moves its mouth." Sleep soon came over little Curtis, and his dad carried him upstairs and tenderly tucked him into bed. "I will never forget that Christmas Eve," Curtis determined.

The years flew by, and on another memorable Christmas he found himself again at his father's side. This time the older man lay weak from cancer. But despite his pain, he asked, "Curtis, please carry me to the family room so I can watch them open presents." The old man was able to sit there for only fifteen minutes when tears of pain moistened his cheeks. He asked, "Curtis carry me back to bed." Gently the strong son gathered his frail father into his arms recalling the night many years before when his dad had carried him to his bedroom after their private Christmas celebration.

Tears ran down Curtis' face as he nestled his dad into bed, and seeing the tears, the old man pointed to a tape recorder beside the bed. Curtis turned it on, and together they listened to the narrator reading the holy Bible. It was John 14. "In my father's house are many rooms," said the Son of God the night before he died. "I am going there to prepare a place for you. I will come back and take you to be with me so that you also may be where I am."

Silently, Curtis thanked God for sending His Son to earth to save the human race from the cancer of sin and for giving his family the gift of faith in Christ. He thanked Jesus for giving them those moments together, and for those times when the Lord had carried them both.

Two days later, Curtis' dad passed away. But the memories aren't painful, but precious. Says Curtis. "Because of Jesus, whose birth we celebrate on Christmas, I know I will see my father again. And what a welcome home that will be!"

Let's all go home for Christmas. The road is impassible for those refuse to believe in Jesus. They're satisfied living and dying without Him. They live only in love for this world. And this world is all they'll ever have, and when they die, they shall be homeless forever.

But those who know they need a heavenly Father who loves them just because He is love, those who see in Jesus the divine Savior from sin – why by God's grace they are on the road home to eternal life. Go to Bethlehem this Christmas. Kneel at the manger. Worship the Christ Child as your Savior and King! Welcome home. Amen.