

“Coming Home For . . . Christmas?”—John 1:10-13

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Coming Home For . . . Christmas?”, is John 1:10-13 → *Jesus was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

“I’ll be home for Christmas.” These words from one of the secular Christmas songs reflect an expectation of many people for their celebration of Christmas. Christmas is a time when family should be together so we make plans to go “home” for the holidays. Many think of it as a time for family to gather and be with those they love and with whom they should feel a sense of belonging. After all, “there’s no place like home for the holidays.”

But . . . where is “home?” People who have lived many years in one place will speak about going “home for the holidays,” many times referring to the house or town in which they were raised. In fact, “home” can be so bound up in mom and/or dad that when they’ve passed away

“home for the holidays” can become a blur.

For many, coming “home” for Christmas seems more like a nightmare than a family reunion. Strained relationship between siblings which spans years of resentments seem to surface and created discord. Just walking into the house can created a sense of anxiety for some and bring out memories of emotional, verbal or physical abuse. Sinners living together under one roof will find their sin displayed years after the living together is over because that sin has not been dealt with properly. It can destroy the “peace, good will toward men” which the family get-togethers on Christmas claim to celebrate.

When Jesus came to earth on that first Christmas He should have had a sense of coming “home.” After all, verse 10 of our text says *the world was made through Him*, so it would seem that He should feel “at home” here. There is a sense in which we can describe Jesus as coming “home” for Christmas. Yet our text also says *the world did not know Him*. *The world* to which John refers are people who are lost in their sin. While they need a Savior, they do not recognize such a need because of not acknowledging their sin or refusing to receive the Savior in the midst of their sin and guilt.

Even though the sinful world did not know Jesus surely His family would recognize Him, not? Certainly He would have a sense of belonging amongst *His own people*. These would be the people to whom

Yahweh had revealed Himself throughout history **for the specific purpose of bringing Jesus “home.”** Sadly, verse 11 of our text says: *He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him.* Jesus was not “welcomed home for Christmas” because of peoples’ stubborn unbelief and lost condition in sin. Yahweh had described this “home-coming” 700 years prior in Isaiah 53:3 → *He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.* A depiction of Jesus’ crucifixion. What a welcome “home.”

However, it was just for this reason that Jesus came into our world, into our lives and into our homes. Hebrews 2:14-17 says that *since . . . the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, (that is, He became a human being) that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. Since He came to help the offspring of Abraham . . . He had to be made like His brothers in every respect . . . to make propitiation for the sins of the people.* He came to give our identity and sense of belonging a far deeper meaning!

According to verse 12 of our text we truly experience “family” by faith in Jesus. It says: *But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.* Why would you

believe *in His name*? Because you see your deepest need. In your sin you see your need for a Savior to deal with that sin. This is the true cause for rejoicing on that first Christmas and every Christmas since. The announcement of the angel to the shepherds was that **a Savior** was born. This is the *good news of great joy . . . for all . . . people*. (cf. Luke 2:10-11)

When, by faith in Jesus, you see this sin dealt with once and for all, then you have truly “come home.” Verse 13 describes your connection to the LORD as members of **His** family by His working through your baptism. You are reborn as His children *not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God*.

The struggle is that some Christians have a very limited view of what it means to be God’s *children*. This can be especially evident in connection with family celebrations during the holidays. People who give no thought in their everyday lives to meeting Jesus at worship may find themselves sitting in a church pew because it’s an important “family” tradition. While it is important for families to worship together it is vitally important that their worship transcend their identity *of blood . . . the will of the flesh and the will of man to see the will . . . of God* as children who are members of **His** family. In other words, Jesus wants you to feel “at home” in His forgiveness of sins and grace dispensed and received in the presence of His children gathered in worship all year long!

Christmas is a celebration of the incarnation—God becoming man in the birth of Jesus. However, it is not reserved for a holiday called “Christmas.” It is something special in your identity as God comes to you daily through His written Word as well as through the means of grace distributed and received regularly by His children in worship. God wants the celebration of Christmas to be an act of His doing in your heart every single day *so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith as you are rooted and grounded in His love.* (cf. Ephesians 3:17)

Being “at home” in God’s grace in Jesus Christ daily and regularly translates into your home life. Instead of harboring resentments for years you can confess your sin of allowing those resentments to govern your relationships with other family members and express a humble love for them in forgiveness. It can help you to be a presence of peace in the midst of the turmoil of sin as you strive to act with good will toward others. Knowing your proper identity as God’s child can help you to respond to others respectfully rather than react in selfish anger or pride. After all, you know the good tidings of great joy which you are celebrating are bound up in your Savior, Jesus, Who is Lord of your celebrations!

Since you’ve been given *the right to become children of God* you can truly “be home for Christmas” in the forgiveness of sins. And there truly is “no place like home for the holidays” as the Holy Spirit sanctifies every

day as a holy day where Christ dwells in your heart through faith.
Coming home for Christmas is coming to the LORD by daily reading His
Word & prayer, by regularly partaking of the Lord's Supper and by being
"at home" in His grace at all times! Amen.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend on us, we pray;

Cast out our sin, and enter in, Be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell;

Oh, come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel!

(LSB 361:4)

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