

Sermon – Christmas Eve 2016

I'll be Home for Christmas

Luke 2:1-7 – Isaiah 9:6-7



Dear Friends,

We are so glad to you are joining us tonight, for some of you might be a first time being in this Church, welcome! For others might be a home coming! Welcome also. I know some of you traveled from perhaps distant places just to be with your families this Christmas, to be home, and here you are tonight! What a special night it is!

There is an old song that expresses this yearning well: "I'll be home for Christmas, if only

in my dreams."

This time of year, we long to be home, to be surrounded by family, to remember simpler times. Home is more than a place. It's more than family. It's a sense of belonging.

However, there are times in which we forget the value of family and home and we detach ourselves from it. Sometimes things happen that disturb the home and family connection. We stop talking to family members and we look forward to be home, with them in times like Christmas, or at least not with the people we are estranged with.

Jake Wilkinson is an 18-year-old attending college in California, in the 1998 fictional movie: "I'll Be Home for Christmas"

He has not been home since his mother died and his father remarried shortly after. A few days before Christmas Eve, his father offers to give him his vintage 1957 Porsche 356 if he gets home by 6:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve for Christmas dinner. But he doesn't want to go home, instead tries to go somewhere else, avoiding home at all costs. But later on he does find himself making his way, yes, to New York, making his way through a series of adventures and incidents, and one of those incidents happens when he stumbles upon Nolan, a simple-minded thief who is driving stolen kitchen goods to his dealer near New York, a police officer stops because they were speeding, and to get out of the situation they end up giving away all the goods to the children at nearby hospital, but there, something happens that helps him and others to realize the value of home and family.

This is what happens, let's watch:

A! the voice of a child! Right?! Now, from this moment on, Jake continues making his way home, but with a different intention, to be with his family, not because he was bribed with a Porsche. He did make it home, a few minutes before the set time. But intentionally waits until past that time so he will not arrive in time to get the Porsche, he realizes that what's more important is home, family and not material things. He then finally accepts his step mother into his family. There, a happy Christmas reunion, there a happy return to his home.

O, the power of family, of home, and getting together during this time of Christmas. But there is something else that we need to consider this wonderful evening as we come together this Good Night, la Noche Buena.

Today, we celebrate the God who left His home to join us here, so that heaven could be our home, and not just for a moment but for eternity, and in the process those who welcome him would also experience a different kind of life; a life of joy and peace, of values and love and of care and grace, in our own hearts, and in our relationships with one another, too. To God, home and family are very important, in fact when Jesus was born it had to be in his home town of Bethlehem, because that's where his family was from.

Now, yes, it is a true fact of life that we have to leave home and go places, not problem. The problem is the reason we leave home. As you see like the fictional Jake Wilkinson, many of us have run from home. Now of course he was away to college, that's a good reason, isn't it? We do move away, we do attend school, but we gladly return home again, and again. Not so in Jake's story. He took this opportunity to declare freedom, or was he free? We too, run away from home. We have run away from God, thinking we are free from him, or religion, for that matter, only we have run into the darkness of this world and into the kingdom of death, we have done so by our own thoughts, and desires, by walking away from God. No wonder we live a life that doesn't appear complete, we are lost, we are disoriented, we are sick. That happens when someone runs away from home, doesn't it.

Now, sometimes there are valid reasons why people run away from home. Maybe it was a conflict with our parents, maybe we were the black sheep, or simply maybe we weren't loved enough, so we went and sought love somewhere else, or begun to do things just to bury our pain and suffering, maybe we did get successful somewhere else, yet inside we are aching because we miss home; maybe because we need a home. I know, I was one of those running away from home!

Yet, here we are celebrating Christmas on this wonderful night, but something is not making sense, how can we believe that Christ, the New born baby, has been born for you and for me, for us? Didn't the prophet say: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given? Didn't he say that "His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."?

How is it that if Christ has come as the ultimate demonstration of God's love, yet we went through pain in our lives, that's why we have run from home, for those who have run away from home. Where was God when we were abused, or mistreated, or when we didn't have anything to eat, or when, Mom left, or when Dad left home, or when Mom, or Dad died, and now we have to fend for ourselves. It was hard, wasn't it, some of us have been there, yes we know. It doesn't make sense!

Yet dear Friends, here is the Good News, even when you went through what you had to go through, God was there, always, caring, protecting you, encouraging you, even to this day, for he never leaves us or abandons us. He patiently carries you on his shoulders as a Good shepherd carries a broken and injured lamb. And one day he will bring you home to him forever, if you receive his gift. If you say yes I want to come home, I would love to be home, not just this earthly home but heaven forever.

Where was God when you needed him the most? He has been there! All the time, all the way! He has been there as patient parents eagerly expecting the arrival

of their children from distant places to come home to be with them, especially at times like Christmas.

That's his desire. In fact that's why he left his home, Heaven, so that he would become like one of us, suffer like one of us, but to die in our place, to suffer the agony of the cross and death, that our running away from God has caused, that is what we call sin, our disobedience, our disbelief, and the brokenness and death that sin causes; so that you don't have to go through all that. That's good news!

That's why we are told today: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end..."

This Child and Son born and given to us, is yours now. Receive him! He is your true Christmas gift. He has come to grant you a heavenly home, and he desires peace and harmony for your earthly home too. He desires to destroy anything and everything the enemy has brought in your midst that estranged you from one another, he wants to make you wholesome, as a glimpse of what is to come with him in heaven.

Now, we worship him, we give him the glory because he has prepared us a home, and it does start here. This place, we often call it the house of prayer, is the place where God blesses us with all kinds of gifts, and keeps us in this thing we call the kingdom of life. Here is where His government is. Here is where joy begins, here is where our heavenly home begins, here is where he welcomes you!

May you be blessed with this home, and in your homes, but also with your Heavenly home.

Amen.