

Home for the Holidays

[Isaiah 9:2-7](#), [Luke 2:1-20](#)

‘Home for the Holidays’ – it sounds so good. We think of bringing everyone in the family together for a special time. We always plan a big dinner complete with turkey and all the trimmings, or ham or seafood – whatever makes it into your family traditions. But let’s not forget the all important pumpkin pie and that special table filled with desserts! I hope everyone ate dinner before coming tonight! If not, it will taste all the better after church! ‘Home for the Holidays’ means a warm welcome to all our friends and family, as we sit around the hearth and share joy and laughter, presents and music.

It is interesting how very different the scene was for the first Christmas. Think about the story you have heard, maybe many times before. Mary and Joseph had to travel back to Joseph’s home town, but there was no warm welcome waiting

for them. There were no family members ready to take them in for the night. There was no warm fire or hearty meal waiting. There was only a lonely stable – cold, dark, and unwelcome. We have a newborn baby that does not have the warmth of a good shelter and comfortable bedding. We have a stable, swaddling clothes, and a bed of hay in a manger.

Others are present at this first Christmas. We have shepherds who are known as transients – they simply go with the herds and are never home. They sleep outside with the animals, not inside with a warm fire burning and a hearty meal waiting for them. They too are not ‘Home for the Holidays.’

Later our story brings three kings from a foreign land. They are very far from home in hostile territory as they come in search of the Son of God. God called them away from the security of their home to a strange town in a strange land to find

a king, not in a palace with all the comforts of home but in a stable with the humble beasts of the field.

Yet with all these characters being away from home, there is warmth and joy that comes even in these adverse conditions. God's only Son is born as the Savior of the world. We find Mary and Joseph making a home for the newborn baby even in difficult circumstances. We find the animals, lowly beasts of the field, making a home for this newborn baby who would bring light to our darkness and joy to our sorrow.

The angels in this story tell us of a child born in the lowly, obscure city of Bethlehem, who is the Savior – Christ the Lord. We are told these good tidings of great joy even in the absence of our 'Home for the Holidays' celebration. The angels rejoice by saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, goodwill toward all humankind."

‘Home for the Holidays’ has such a special meaning for us, yet at times even this concept can be difficult. Not everyone has a warm, cozy family and plentiful food and gifts to share. Some may be finding it hard to feel that special glow during this season. Many are away from home during this holiday season, serving our country in foreign lands or they are simply unable to come together with family and friends this year.

Perhaps there are difficulties that are clouding the spirit of this joyous season. There were difficulties with the first Christmas as well. Mary and Joseph certainly were not wealthy. They were simple, humble people who took on the responsibility of serving as parents to the Christ child. I am sure their worries were only enhanced once Jesus was born. Yet there was a peace provided by Almighty God that surrounded this family as they

made a home for the newborn baby. Love truly came down at Christmas.

Have you experienced God's love for yourself? God can provide that warm, family feeling even in the midst of dark times. 'Home for the Holidays' takes on a special meaning when we remember the real reason for the season. God sent a very special gift of God's son to be the Savior of us all. When we step forward and accept God's gift of love for ourselves, we are saying yes to a peace that passes all understanding. We are saying the Christmas is not a day but a frame of mind. Perhaps today is the day when you step forward and give your cares and worries to God. Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Christ. It is ok to say, "Merry Christmas!" Many traditions exist around this time and around the world, but let us not forget what we celebrate. 'Home for the Holidays' holds the special

meaning of welcoming the Christ-child into our world and into our hearts. “Joy to the World, the Lord has come!” Once again, I would like to quote the immortal words of Dr. Seuss.

“Christmas day is in our grasp, so long as we have hands to clasp. Christmas day will always be, just as long as we have we. Welcome Christmas while we stand, heart to heart and hand in hand.” Amen.