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Home for Christmas

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John 1:1-5, 10-14, Ephesians 3: 14-21

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Aah...home for the holidays. Isn't that what every heart desires this time of year? Song lyricists write about it:

Oh, there's no place like home for the holidays,
For no matter how far away you roam
When you long for the sunshine of a friendly gaze,
For the holidays - you can't beat home, sweet home

I met a man who lives in Tennessee, and he was headin' for
Pennsylvania and some homemade pumpkin pie
From Pennsylvania folks are travelin' down to Dixie's sunny shore
From Atlantic to Pacific
Gee, the traffic is terrific

Oh there's no place like home for the holidays,
'Cause no matter how far away you roam
If you want to be happy in a million ways,
For the holidays - you can't beat home, sweet home,
For the holidays - you can't beat home, sweet home.

What does "home" represent to you?

--The home in which you grew up?

--Grandma's house that was "over the river and through the woods?"

--Perhaps the house in which you raised your children?

In 1986, five-year-old Saroo Munshi Khan and his 14-year-old brother were searching the streets for spare change in their home city of Berhanpur, India. Saroo became separated from his older brother [Guddu] who had wandered beyond the train station. Tired, Saroo sat in an empty railcar, where he fell asleep waiting for his brother's return.

A few hours later, Saroo woke up 1,500 kilometers away, in Calcutta/Kolkata. Far, far away from his home and family, he survived on the streets for weeks. Ultimately he was taken into an orphanage, and later adopted by loving Australian couple.

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Growing up in Tasmania, he was thriving and content. But there were flashbacks to his childhood, and many unanswered questions. He wondered what had become of his birth mother, and his siblings.

There was a part of him that yearned for home.

So when he discovered Google Earth, which provides aerial views of the planet, he saw it as a chance to track down his birth family. With the help and support of his adoptive parents, and Google Earth, he went to work. Over five years, he embarked on an “obsessive” search, tracing a spiderweb’s worth of train tracks, all spiraling out from the city now known as Kolkata. Then one day, he came upon something: a water tower he recognized.

“Was this reality? Am I dreaming?” he wondered.

From there, like puzzle pieces — blurred but familiar —landmarks slowly fell into place. A train-station platform. A pedestrian bridge. A ravine. It was the topography of a lost childhood. He had located what he believed was the first home he’d ever known.

“It was a surreal moment,” he explains of his discovery. “Inside, I was jumping with joy.”

Saroo's odyssey of reconnecting with his childhood home is chronicled in a memoir titled: [A Long Journey Home](#), and is it also the subject of the movie [Lion](#) (starring Nichole Kidman and Dev Patel).

In 2012, Saroo embarked on a trip from Australia back to India. Once he arrived, he shared his story with locals, who helped him find his way back home to his mother and surviving brother and sister. Twenty-six years after his unintended leaving, Saroo finally found his way back home.

For some, home is not a place, a geographic location on a map. Home represents something more dynamic. A child was living in a homeless shelter with her family. A reporter engaged her in conversation, inquiring about the girl’s thoughts about being homeless.

“Oh, we have a home. We just don’t have a house to put it in.”

She touches on a different definition of home—one that is defined by the relationships that exist within a family versus the surroundings in which they live.

The gospel of Luke tells us that because of the census, Joseph and Mary had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem, Joseph's ancestral home. Consider this: the distance between these two towns is between 70-80 miles, depending on the route. Imagine walking that distance while nine months pregnant! And while there are countless depictions of Mary and Joseph making the journey with a donkey, the Bible makes no mention of one. It is more likely that the trip took them 4-5 days on foot.

Great numbers of people were making the same journey, for the same reason, so all the accommodations for travelers were sold out. The inn was full. No room. Mary's labor begins, and she gave birth to Jesus. Apparently in a barn. No room. And most certainly they were far from home.

I enjoy the comic strip, *For Better Or For Worse*, which portrays the family life of John and Ellie and their three children. Recent strips have focused on a family trip to share Christmas with their father's sides of the family in Winnepeg. The aunt and uncle operate a family farm, which offers some eye-opening experiences for the children. This week, a snowstorm is coming and the family is preparing. Elizabeth who is about 7 years old is in the barn helping her uncle put down hay for the calves when it dawns on her and she says to him: "Jesus was born in a barn like this wasn't he! With cows, an' lambs, an' chickens." "Sure was", her uncle replies. Then she asks as only a child could, "Uncle Danny? Did it smell this bad?"

Fast forward to the visit of the Magi, as described in Matthew 2 (v.11, 16), who apparently find Jesus in a house in Bethlehem. However their stay there is short lived as King Herod is threatened by rumors of a rival king and orders that all male children under the age of two be killed. Warned about this, Joseph flees with his family to Egypt. Several years later, after the death of Herod, the family returns "home".

Given all this, one wonders what that word "home" meant to Jesus.

As an adult when he became an itinerant preacher, he relied on the hospitality of others for both food and lodging. Among those who housed Jesus were Mary/Martha/Lazarus—siblings in Bethany; He stayed with and Simon and Andrew (Mark 1:29) and surely there were others.

When calling people to discipleship—to follow him—he said:

"Foxes have holes, birds of the air have their nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." (Matthew 8:20 and Luke 9:58)

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Perhaps he was saying that if/when we follow him, we may be called to give up the comforts of home? That 'home' will take on a new meaning? Heaven will be our home?

Furthermore, Jesus experienced rejection when returned he home:

6 ¹⁻² He... returned to his hometown. His disciples came along. On the Sabbath, he gave a lecture in the meeting place. He made a real hit, impressing everyone. "We had no idea he was this good!" they said. "How did he get so wise all of a sudden, get such ability?"

³ But in the next breath they were cutting him down: "He's just a carpenter—Mary's boy. We've known him since he was a kid. We know his brothers, James, Justus, Jude, and Simon, and his sisters. Who does he think he is?"

⁴⁻⁶ Jesus told them, "A prophet has little honor in his hometown, among his relatives, on the streets he played in as a child." Jesus wasn't able to do much of anything there—he laid hands on a few sick people and healed them, that's all. He couldn't get over their stubbornness. (Mark 6:1-6, The Message)

This rejection is foretold by John who in the opening chapter of his gospel says: ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. (John 1:10-11)

At his birth, there was no room for Jesus at the inn. As a toddler he and his parents became refugees, fleeing to Egypt. As an adult, Jesus is not welcome in his hometown. He was not recognized nor received in his own time, as often in ours.

Where *is* Jesus welcome? Where *is* Jesus at home?

Jesus says this:

"Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." (John 14:23)

Furthermore, he says: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." (Revelation 3:20)

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Did you hear that? Jesus is looking to move in with you! He wants to make his home with you, and share life with you. But Jesus is a gentleman. He's not going to kick the door down, and force his way in. Jesus is not only polite, but Jesus is patient. He will wait until you are ready to invite him in.

Throughout the scriptures the *heart* represents not only the emotional aspect of a person, but also the will/volition, and the intellect or the locus for decision making. The heart is the central core of one's personality. Integrity and commitment are matters of the heart.

Romans 10:8-10 illustrates the importance of the heart: To be saved one must confess Jesus as Lord, but also one must "believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead....For it is with your heart that you believe."

And once we come to trust Christ, and believe this truth, we may indeed be willing to crack open the door of our lives and make room for Jesus. Paul writes in Ephesians, that through the Spirit of God, Christ will indeed will "...dwell in your hearts through faith." (Eph. 3: 17)

And so as we celebrate the earthly birthday of our Savior, we celebrate the mystery of the Incarnation—Immanuel—"God with us", "God with skin on".

John reminds us that Jesus made an incredible journey from heaven to earth, from eternity into the confines of our time-space continuum, and further, from Spirit into the confines of a human body. Why? Because God so loved you, me, that he gave his one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not die but have eternal life. (Jn 3:16)

And this Jesus, who loves you so, is homeless this Christmas...until he finds a home in your heart and mine. Jesus desires to dwell within us as our most intimate soulmate/companion. By the mystery of the indwelling Spirit of God, Jesus can find a home in your heart and mine.

Perhaps like Sunoo, you were "at home with God" at one time, but you unintentionally wandered away and have been looking to find your way back for a while now...OR perhaps you were at home but you had a falling out, something happened, words were exchanged, and in anger you walked away.

Either way, hear this Good News: God the Father is ever seeking and looking for us when we are lost. Likewise if we purposefully walk away, like

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the father in the story of the Prodigal Son, God is on the look out for us, willing and ready to welcome us with open arms! No matter what, we are made to be at home with God, through Jesus Christ.

How do you define "home"?

Let me suggest that you will find your truest home, your deepest sense of belonging--in the company and companionship of Jesus Christ, who loves you more than you can imagine.

Do you have room in your heart for Jesus?

1. Have you any room for Jesus,
He who bore your load of sin?
As He knocks and asks admission,
Sinner, will you let Him in?

o *Refrain:*

Room for Jesus, King of Glory!
Hasten now His Word obey;
Swing the heart's door widely open,
Bid Him enter while you may.

2. Room for pleasure, room for business,
But for Christ the Crucified,
Not a place that He can enter,
In the heart for which He died?

3. Have you any room for Jesus,
As in grace He calls again?
Oh, today is time accepted,
T'morrow you may call in vain.

Have you any room for Jesus,
As he calls your name in grace?
Now is the time to answer and
To know his warm embrace...

(My verse!)

4. Room and time now give to Jesus,
Soon will pass God's day of grace;
Soon thy heart left cold and silent,
And thy Savior's pleading cease.

(Go back to the chorus)

What could be better than for Christ to find his home in your heart and mine this Christmas?

Let's pray:

John 1: 1-5, 9-14 NIV

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome^[a] it.

⁹The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Ephesians 3:14-21 NIV Paul's prayer....

¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family^[a]in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.