

“Going Home for Christmas”

The Rev. S. Shane Nanney ~ January 4, 2026

Ephesians 1:3-14 and John 1:10-18

It is ironic when you read the account of the Christmas Story in the Bible because no one was at home that First Christmas...

...Mary and Joseph’s home was Nazareth and they were in Bethlehem.

...The Shepherds were at work that night.

...The Wisemen weren’t home as they were traveling to find the newborn King.

...Even Jesus was not at home!

Yet we all want to be HOME for Christmas!

In December 1903, after many attempts, the Wright brothers were successful in getting their "flying machine" off the ground. Thrilled, they telegraphed this message to their sister Katherine: "We have actually flown 120 feet. Will be home for Christmas." Katherine hurried to the editor of the local newspaper and showed him the message. He glanced at it and said, "How nice. The boys will be home for Christmas." He totally missed the big news--man had flown.

A young woman was nervous about meeting her boyfriend’s parents for the first time; she wanted to look her absolute best. As she glanced at herself in the mirror, she noticed her black pumps looked a little dingy, so she gave them a fast swipe with the paper towel she had used to blot her breakfast bacon. When she arrived at their home she was greeted by the parents and their spoiled, cranky poodle. The dog got a whiff of bacon grease on her shoes and followed her around all evening. At the end of the evening, as she was getting ready to leave, her boyfriend’s parents said, "Cleo really likes you, dear, and she is an excellent judge of character. We are delighted to welcome you to our little family."

Home – A place where imperfection is made perfect.

When I'm home, I am accepted JUST AS I AM
Home – A place where FAILURE finds FORGIVENESS.
If our greatest need had been INFORMATION,
God would have sent an EDUCATOR.
If our greatest need had been TECHNOLOGY,
God would have sent a SCIENTIST.
If our greatest need had been MONEY,
God would have sent an ECONOMIST.
If our greatest need had been PLEASURE,
God would have sent an ENTERTAINER.
But our greatest need was FORGIVENESS, so God sent us a SAVIOR!
Home – A place where you can be at PEACE.

Three things steal our peace:

- Grief—the ache we carry when life breaks us open.
- Guilt—the heavy stone we roll around in our hearts.
- Grudges—yesterday's hurts that insist on living rent free in today.

Scripture whispers the antidotes: “Cast your cares on him, for He cares for you.” “He will save his people from their sins.” “Whoever loves God must also love their brother.”

Karen was expecting another child and so she worked to prepare little three-year-old Michael for the birth of his baby sister. Every night Michael sang to his sister in his mother's tummy.

During the delivery of the baby serious complications developed. After many hours of struggle, Michael's little sister was born. But she was in very serious condition. She was rushed to a neonatal intensive care unit in another hospital in Knoxville, Tennessee. Instead of getting better, the little girl continued to decline. The pediatric specialist told Karen and her husband, “There is very little hope. Be prepared for the worst.” The parents contacted a local cemetery about a burial plot.

Meanwhile Michael continued to beg his parents to let him see his sister. “I want to sing to her,” he said. But kids were never allowed in intensive care.

The second week of his sister’s intensive care stay, Michael’s sister looked like she wouldn’t make it through the week. So, Karen made up her mind that she would take Michael to see whether his sister at the hospital liked it or not. If Michael hadn’t seen her right away, he might never have seen her at all.

Karen dressed him in oversized scrub suit and marched him into ICU. The head nurse demanded that they leave. The mother instinct rose up strong in Karen, and she looked at the head nurse with steel-eyed determination: “He’s not leaving until he sees his sister!” Karen took Michael to his sister’s bedside. After a few moments of looking at his sister all connected to tube, three-year-old Michael began to sing.

“You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are gray. You’ll never know dear how much I love you. Please don’t take my sunshine away.”

And something in that tiny child stirred—breathing eased, pulse steadied, hope cracked open like dawn over a dark ridge. The next day, she was well enough to go home. Doctors called it remarkable. The magazine called it a miracle. The family called it love.

And I think God nodded and said, “Yes, that’s exactly how I come into the world—quiet, persistent, singing love into the shadows.”

Because Jesus is God’s love song to us. The Word made flesh is God leaning close and whispering, “You matter to Me. You are My sunshine. You are My beloved. Come home.”

The older I get, the more I realize that coming home isn’t really about geography. It’s not about the perfect tree or the perfectly behaved family or the dinner where nobody burns the rolls. Home is something deeper, something sacred.

Home is where you finally stop running. Home is where your name is known. Home is where forgiveness hangs by the door like a warm coat. Home is where peace—real peace—sits in the chair across from you and says, "Stay awhile. There's no hurry now."

John tells the story this way: "The Word became flesh and lived among us." Not visited. Not passed through. Lived. Moved in. Unboxed the dishes. Got mail. That's God saying, "I'm home with you now. And you can come home to Me."

And maybe—just maybe—that's what we've been longing for all along. To know that after all the wandering, the worrying, the wishing we were someone else or somewhere else... the door is still open. The light is still on. The welcome still stands.

The amazing news of Christmas is not simply that Jesus came into the world. Lots of babies have come into the world. The astonishing thing that ought to stop us in our tracks to listen—is that He came for us.

Jesus left His home so that every one of us could find ours.

So, this Christmas—whatever address is on your mail, whatever joys or sorrows sit at your table—hear this invitation in the quiet places of your heart:

Come home.

Come home from your grief. Come home from your guilt. Come home from your grudges. Come home from believing you are unworthy. Come home from hiding. Come home from thinking you must earn God's love.

Come home to the One who has already made His home with you.

Christmas is God opening the front door wide, leaning out onto the porch, and calling into the winter air:

"You matter to Me. You are loved. The light is on. Come home."

And may you, this Christmas season, hear that call—not with your ears, but with your heart—and step toward the warmth that has been waiting for you all along. Amen.