

## I'll Be Home for Christmas

For sixteen weeks of the fall and winter of 1943, Bing Crosby's "I'll Be Home for Christmas" topped the music charts. At this time America was in the depths of World War II. The song touched the hearts of soldiers and civilians alike. It became the most requested song of the U.S.O. shows in Europe and the Pacific. Today after speaking the funeral for John Leutwyler, this song was playing in the Memorial Chapel at The Veteran's Cemetery as we walked out. Brother Leutwyler was part of "The Greatest Generation." He was reared in the Great Depression and fought in the Army Air Corp during the Second World War.

I know it could not qualify as a great hymn of the faith, but in this Christmas season "I'll Be Home for Christmas" fits quite appropriately. When we started Christchurch Baptist Fellowship virtually from scratch, Johnny and Janey Leutwyler would keep our kids for us while Barbara and I would go visiting. They were great members. They helped us tremendously, worked hard and didn't complain. In 2000, Mrs. Leutwyler went home to be with the Lord and this week Brother Leutwyler joined his Saviour and his wife. The old soldier made it home for Christmas.

In this melancholy, but needful theme:

### **1. Remember those who cannot be home for Christmas.**

Let us hold up in prayer those who are providentially hindered from being home for Christmas. The ones that come to mind are our service personnel who are stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan, South Korea, and Germany this Christmas. Our church is certainly missing the Stayte family since Gary, one of our fine deacons, has been called into active service. The song says,

"I'll be home for Christmas,  
You can count on me.  
Please have snow and mistletoe  
And presents on the tree.  
Christmas Eve will find me,  
Where the love light gleams.  
I'll be home for Christmas,  
If only in my dreams."

So as we assemble under our trees on Christmas morning, let us not forget those who are dreaming of being with us. Then don't forget to pray for them. *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,"* (Philippians 1:3, 4).

### **2. If at all possible, be home for Christmas.**

Our youngest, Sean was just lamenting, "Dad, it's getting to me that when I wake up Christmas morning, none of my siblings will be there with me." He is the youngest of our four children; his brother and sisters have all married off and made him an uncle. He's in his final year of college and soon, we realize he'll be going the way of others. We have been blessed in years past to have some, or sometimes all, of our married children with us for Christmas, but this year two will be with their extended families on their spouse's side while one stays at home with their own immediate family. So in reality it is amazing Sean has had some siblings to celebrate with for this long. I need to remind our youngest that at least he'll be home for Christmas. And God willing, we'll be at home with him!

It is easy to become nostalgic to the point of not enjoying this festive holiday for thinking about those with whom you'll not be, but for the sake of others, be there for them! In some cases it may be

down to being with yourself and Jesus for Christmas. But if you are centered in God's will, rejoice! *"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"* (I Thessalonians 5:18). Christmas is a season for miracles, so hold out for yours this Christmas.

### **3. There's no place like the home for Christmas.**

In the case of my old friend Johnny Leutwyler, he is truly in his eternal home for Christmas! *"Because man goeth to his long home..."* (Ecclesiastes 12:5). Rather than feel deprived of loved ones who have gotten home ahead of you, look forward to the time when we'll all be in heaven.

Christmas is about the baby Jesus being born in the manger so that He might 33 ½ years later die on the cross for our sins. Christ's purpose in coming is to make a way to take us home. And the only way home is accepting Christ and the forgiveness of sins. *"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins"* (Matthew 1:21).

The missionary had served the Lord in Africa faithfully for twenty years. As the ship pulled into the harbor, the bands were there, hundreds of people were waving banners all to welcome President Theodore Roosevelt who had been hunting in Africa for three weeks. Discouraged because there was no one there save one solitary friend, the missionary said, "Its' not fair; I've served the Lord for these many years and I have no welcome like this to welcome me home." His old companion said, "Friend, you're not home yet." Cheer up my brothers and sisters in Christ! You're not home yet and in all truth, there's no place like home. We have seen some wonderful Christmas celebrations here on earth, but they shall all pale in the light of His glory, when we are truly home for Christmas.

- Pastor Pope -

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