

Home For Christmas

Text: Luke 2:25-40

Christmas eve will find me
Where the love light gleams;
I'll be home for Christmas,
If only in my dreams.
I'll be home for Christmas,
If only in my dreams.

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas,
Just like the ones I used to know;
Where the treetops glisten and children listen
To hear sleigh bells in the snow.

The abridged ending of the original 1947 *Miracle on Thirty-Fourth Street*:

Susie: I believe. I believe. Stop, Uncle Fred! Stop! Stop! Stop!

Doris: Suzie! Suzie! Suzie, where are you going?

Uncle Fred: What is she doing? - Suzie! - Suzie! Suzie, where are you?

Susie: I'm upstairs!

Doris: You shouldn't run around in other people's houses. Where are you going?

Susie: To see if there's a swing! There is one! There is one!

These are just three quotes taken from songs and movies that base their theme solidly in the subject of home. There is something about holidays that create, as the Germans would say, *sehnsucht* which has no equivalent translatable English word. The closest we may come to defining it is, "the inconsolable longing in the human heart for we know not what." There is a similar concept in Welsh; it is the word *hiraeth*. The closest English definition to this Welsh word would be, "homesickness for a home you cannot return to, or even a home that never existed at all." I would like to focus on our English word "homesick." I find hope in that English word, which means, "experiencing a longing for one's home during a period of absence from it." So being homesick is not full of desperation that cannot be satisfied. There lies beneath this homespun word belief that the longing shall be fulfilled.

1. THE LONGING FOR MATRIMONIAL FULFILMENT

Joseph had the longing for the intertwining of the soul of a man and a woman. The Bible says of Joseph: Matthew 1:19a: "Then Joseph her husband, being a just man...." There is only one kind of bride a just man would be looking for; that description is found in Proverbs 18:22: "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD." Temporarily, Joseph's hopes were dashed when he found out that Mary was with child. But when the Angel of the Lord told Joseph that she was carrying the Messiah, without hesitation, he proceeded with the planned marriage (Matthew 1:20).

Their love was pure and we see that he is her champion. After the wise men left, Joseph was told by God to go home by another way because the murderous Herod was determined to take the life of his perceived threat. "And when they (the wise men) were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt" (Matthew 2:13 and 14). Without a courier or message from Rome, Joseph heard again from God as recorded in Matthew 2:19: "But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt."

Remember the words of our Lord on the cross: "Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home" (John 19:27). What appears to have happened is the Lord's half-brothers had not yet believed, therefore John was given this high honor of taking care of Mary. Tradition says that Joseph had already passed away. I have wondered if the Lord had to take Joseph to heaven because, true to his form, he would have done everything in his power to keep Mary in some measure of comfort as well as protect the Lord Jesus. After all, he was standing by Mary and Jesus when "Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,)...." (Luke 2:34-35a). In essence, God may have said, "Joseph, you cannot interfere with My plan. My Son cannot be protected from death, nor Mary from heartbreak."

Is there an unmarried person reading these words? Keep believing for that spouse. For every longing Adam there is an Eve. For every wistful Eve, God has prepared an Adam. God loves you too much not to fulfill your heart's desire or provide the grace to accept celibacy. How humanly complicated was Mary and Joseph's situation, but the God who walked this young couple through those troubled waters, can give you the fulfillment that you so long for. I would also add, to that married couple that believes all hope is gone, seek God and pursue His will to stay married. Malachi 2:16a: "For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away...." Perhaps the Christmas miracle will occur by the Lord putting a home inside your house.

2. THE LONGING FOR THE RETURN OF THE WAYWARD AND PRODIGAL

You have prayed and at times become despondent. May I remind you of two glorious promises? Joel 2:25: "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you." Isaiah 59:1: "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." Claim Psalm 39:12a: "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears...."

Psalm 89:30-33" "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will

I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.”

3. THE LONGING FOR AN ETERNAL HOME

Ecclesiastes 12:5c: “...man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.” Combine this with Ecclesiastes 7:1b: “...A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one’s birth.” It is a better day because, if you are redeemed, you have graduated to the happiest place in the entire universe. Disney argues that their kingdom and world is the happiest place on earth. Not so! Our eternal home is happier. And our citizenship there promises us wherever we are to be the happiest place on earth. Even in every secular song, the wistfulness for home revolves around people. There are not enough Christmas parties and family reunions to give that total fulfillment. Life with Jesus gives you the happiest place on earth, truly wherever you are, you are home with Jesus: Hebrews 13:5: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” And when God calls us to our long home, here’s what we can look forward to: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:3).

-Pastor Pope-