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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

**“HOME FOR CHRISTMAS”**

John 1:4-9, 12-13

{“Home for the Holidays”}

**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**

“**Home, sweet home.**” At its best, home is where hope is kindled, peace is possible, joy is within reach, and love takes root.

{Frost} Home is much more than a legal residence or a place to sleep or a shelter from the elements. It

**is the place where, when you have to go there,  
they have to take you in.**

Great expectations are wrapped up in that abode, especially at Christmas.

Now and then, home actually lives up to its potential: the tree is beautiful, dinner is delicious, and the gifts satisfy. Best of all, the reunion with family and friends really is sweet. Hope is reignited, peace grows, joy overflows, and the bonds of love are strengthened.

But sometimes the decorations are tacky, the food tastes canned, the gifts disappoint. Worse, reconnecting with kinfolk can be difficult: Mom gets stressed out, Dad won’t shut off the TV long enough to talk, your creepy

uncle gets drunk, big brother is still a bully, and little sister knows just how to get under your skin.

Even when everything goes perfectly, the wonder cannot last: the glistening snow turns to dirty slush, the tree turns brown, leftovers lose their appeal, and the gifts are no longer new. Soon everyone steps back into their day in, day out routine. Christmas fades, and home loses some of its luster.

? Shall we resign ourselves to cynicism and give up on the idea of “home sweet home” at Christmas??

Please, don’t. The Creator has implanted in each of us a deep desire to belong, to be nurtured and protected, and to give and receive love. He is the source of our profound, persistent longing for home.

This yearning is part of what makes us human. If you try to repress it, it won’t go away; it will get twisted into something less wholesome.

? Shall we double-down on our idealism, striving that much harder to create the “perfect” conditions for the “perfect” holiday?

I don’t advise it. No physical dwelling, no matter how spotless and beautifully decorated it is, can fulfill the longings of our hearts.

Healthy connections with family and friends are more gratifying than any physical structure. Still, they can only fill us part of the way, and for a limited time.

? Where does this leave us? Has God designed us with an insatiable desire? Are we doomed to perpetual frustration?

{II Co 5:1} By no means! The Savior has come to give us a true **“home, sweet home,” “a building from God, an eternal house ... not built by human hands.”**

The foundation and heart of this home is kinship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Such relatedness is possible because of Christmas.

□ {Jn 1:4-5, 9, NLT} Speaking of the Incarnation of Christ, the apostle John declares: **“Life itself was in him, and this life gives light to everyone. The light shines through the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it ... The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was [coming] into the world.”**

□ {Jn 1:12-13} John continues: **“To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of a human decision or of a husband’s will, but born of God.”**

{Gal 4:6; NLT; Jn 14:18} Another Scripture explains that when we are **“born of God”** through faith in Christ, the LORD sends **“the Spirit of his Son into [our] hearts, and [we] can call [him] dear Father.”** And to his children he has promised: **“I will not leave you as orphans.”**

{Lk 14:26, NLT} This love is inherently reciprocal. To receive God’s love as his daughter or son, we must love him as our Father. Messiah says, **“If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your ... father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, more than your own life.”**

Hear me: loving God best never inhibits us from loving kin and friends. To the contrary, it empowers us to care for them better than we otherwise could.

Yet, they sometimes misjudge our love. They see it as a zero-sum game, and Jesus as a competitor, so they pressure the Christ Follower to renounce him. Our calling is to stand firm in our love for the Lord.

{Mt 19:26} Those who put him first testify that the cost is worth it. As Jesus promised, **“Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much...”**

{Heb 13:5} Unlike some human fathers, God will **“never .... Leave [us]; never will [he] forsake [us].”** He does not fail to provide a true home for his own: a dwelling where hope is kindled and eventually fulfilled; where peace is not only hypothesized, it is achieved; where joy is within reach and easily embraced; where love not only takes root, it grows to maturity and bears a bumper crop of goodness.

We will not fully inhabit our forever home until this life is completed; but now and then God does show us beautiful glimpses of it. By his grace, we can begin to experience true belonging, and his nurture, protection, and love here and now. It all comes down to Jesus.

May we fan the flames of our God-given desire for home.

May we make the most of the goodness of our earthly homes and families, now and all year long.

But let’s not settle for that! The Lord Jesus is inviting us to draw near and find our **“home, sweet home”** in him.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!