

## CCC COME HOME TO GOD PART 3

### Come home for Christmas

The sermon this morning: "Jesus Walks on the Water." The sermon tonight: "Searching for Jesus"

The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.

Ladies Bible Study will be held Thursday morning at 10 AM. All ladies are invited to lunch in the Fellowship Hall after the B.S. is done.

Weight Watchers will meet at 7 PM at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use large double door at the side entrance.

The Associate Pastor unveiled the church's new tithing campaign slogan last Sunday: "I Upped My Pledge - Up Yours".

I'm no mind reader but my guess is probably two things are true about you right now. One, you're probably a little distracted. You're thinking of the 95 things you have to get done before Tuesday morning like buy the food, wrap

the packages, go to church, prepare the food, etc, etc. You may have had difficulty even getting here to service today.

The other thing I guess is probably true about you is you're probably a little tired. Because there's only one word that can describe what we try to do and accomplish the first three weeks of December every year. *Madness!* I mean just think about this. We cram 80% of all the parties we're going to have in a whole year in a three week period. Then we say, by the way, while we're at it, let's entirely redecorate our house inside and out in three weeks. And since we've got plenty of time, let's buy something for everybody we've ever met. Let's bake every cookie we've ever heard of. And let's consume three times the number of calories we would have in three months in three weeks. Then just to top it off, let's let the kids out of school for two weeks. It's no wonder you're tired and worn out.

So I want to begin this service today by asking all of us to take a deep breath. And you might say while taking that deep breath, “God, slow me down.” The reason why is, the next few minutes may be the only time in the entire Christmas season when you slow down long enough to think about the meaning. I want to invite you in the next couple of minutes to seize the moment. Lay aside your distractions and focus for a few minutes. Because God wants your attention. And this next few minutes could be the turning point of your life.

See Christmas is about connecting with God. It’s about having a relationship with God. That’s what it’s all about – connecting with God. There’s verse in the Bible, Jeremiah 3 “*You belong to Me. So come home.*” One of the fundamental truths of life is this: you belong to God. You weren’t meant to belong to your job or your career.

You weren’t meant to belong to your past and things you regret. You weren’t meant to belong to other people. You weren’t meant to belong to the expectations of others. You were made to belong to God. Because He made you, He created you and He knows everything about you and He made you for His purpose.

You are made to belong to God in every cell of your body. Recently I read an article called “Wired for God”. It says this, “A growing number of scientists at Harvard and other schools are investigating how human biology allows us to connect with God. Andrew Newberg of the University of Pennsylvania says, ‘The human brain is genetically wired to embrace religious beliefs.’ A University of California professor confesses, ‘I once thought spirituality was the opium of the masses... but now I recognize we’re not only

physical beings. We have a spirit.’ A Yale professor says,  
‘I was not prepared for science to take me to God.’”

You, in every cell of your body were wired for God.

That’s why you can find religion in every single culture.

Because we all have this human desire to know our creator,  
to know the one who made us. And God wants you to  
come home to Him at Christmas.

This theme – coming home at Christmas – is very well  
known. You find it in all kinds of songs like “I’ll Be Home  
for Christmas”. It’s in movies, it’s in books, it’s in poetry.  
Mostly it is in films. It’s true that there’s no place like  
home. But movies conveniently forget two facts of reality  
about home.

One, no home is perfect. When you watch a movie  
about coming home at Christmas it’s this idea of perfection  
where everybody gets along together, everybody has every  
need met, everybody loves every gift, no food is burned, no  
one is late, there’s never any problems. It’s a wonderful  
happy time. And if I could just get home for Christmas  
then it will be perfect and my life will be perfect. *Wrong.*

The fact is there are often disappointments at home. There  
are often unfulfilled expectations at home. Do all of *your*  
relatives get a long together? I don’t think so. Is  
everybody going to be perfectly happy with everything  
they get under the tree this year? I don’t think so. I know  
one guy, he actually bought his wife for her big gift at  
Christmas a chain saw. He said, “We needed one!”  
Fortunately the chain saw was not operational when she

opened the package. I think you can summarize the reality of a lot of Christmases in one word – No home is perfect.

And the second thing movies forget about home is no home is permanent. The fact is, kids grow up. People move away. Loved ones die.

Let me say this as gently as possible. If all you have in this life to get on with life is family, one day you're going to be very lonely. Why, because it takes more than family to make it in life. You need family. It's great, wonderful, fantastic. But you need God. Because families don't last. It's not permanent. So you need more than that.

That's why this Christmas, I'd like for you to consider a different kind of coming home at Christmas this year. I want you to think of a spiritual homecoming. A coming home to God. A coming home to your creator.

As I said we're all wired for God. We all belong to God. But it's also our human nature to forget God. I do it all the time. You do too. You can go days, weeks, months, maybe even years without even thinking about God. We get distracted by our careers and our families and our dreams and our hopes and our finances and our debts and our desires. It's very easy to shove God out of your life even though He's the reason that you're here. It's very easy to do that. So you need to come home to God. You need to come back to Him at Christmas time.

It's interesting. I've noticed a lot of people doing this since 9 - 11. When we had reality put right before us People are refocusing on the things that matter most and a lot of people are coming home to God. You maybe thinking well, "What kind I expect if I come home to God

this Christmas?” The Bible is very clear. It tells us very clearly what you can expect if you reconnect with God.

Three things you can expect to come home to.

**1. The first thing you can expect is you’ll come home to His love and His forgiveness.**

This is the very first reason for Christmas – His love and forgiveness. Jesus Christ left His home in heaven to come to your home on earth so that we could get to know Him and so that God could say, “I love you and I want to forgive you.”

Did you know that your heavenly Father wants you to come home? It doesn’t matter who you are or what you’ve done or who you’ve done it with or how long you’ve done it. God says I want you to come home to My

love and My forgiveness. That’s what Christmas is all about.

Let me ask a question. What would keep you from doing that? What would keep you from coming home to God’s love and forgiveness?

For some it maybe the fear of rejection. You may think, “God wouldn’t want me now. I’m too far away from God. I’ve been away too long. I’ve done too many things He probably wouldn’t approve of. I am too far separated from God to be brought back to Him now.”

You’re dead wrong if that’s what your thinking! Look at what the Bible says. Romans 8 “*Nothing* [circle “nothing”] *in all creation is able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.*” I don’t care who you

are or what you've done or how long you've done it, God says "I still love you and I still want to forgive you." God still loves me. Some of you have never said that in your life. Think about the meaning. Let it soak in. God still loves me! If you think that you're too far away from God to ever come home – for whatever reason you might think that, the next verse is for you. God says, "*Come home to Me again for I am merciful.*" It's hard to understand God's grace, It's hard to understand that kind of God.

You may be asking how do I know he loves me? How do I know God loves me? Christmas proves it. God came to earth in a human form – Jesus Christ – to say this is what God is like and to say I love you and I want to forgive you. "*God showed how much He loved us by sending His only Son into the world* [that's what Christmas

is all about] *so that we can have eternal life through Him. This is real love. He sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins*" 1 John 4: 9-10.

The reason why God loves you and you know it is Jesus didn't stay in a little cradle in the manger. He grew up. He went from the cradle to the cross. On the cross with His arms outstretched He was in essence saying "I'd rather die than live without you." That's how much God loves you. The greatest expression of love is Jesus Christ coming to earth at Christmas time. When God came to earth to show His love for us, to pay for our sins, so that we could be forgiven and we could come home to Him. That's real love. Love came down at Christmas time. That's the first thing you can expect if you come home to God at Christmas time. You can expect to receive His love and His forgiveness.

## **2. You can also expect to receive His peace and strength.**

Peace, when things get chaotic in your life. And strength, when you feel like you don't have the energy to go on.

How do you handle situations? When you face an uncertain future, which by the way is your future, when you face tough times which inevitably you're going to face in life, life is not all good times, where do you go for strength? Where do you get the reservoir of power, of peace that gives you the ability to keep on going in the middle of a chaos or a crisis or a tragedy or something that saps every bit of energy in your life.

Where do you go for peace? Where do you go for strength if you don't have God in your life, if you're not connected on a moment by moment basis. Jesus Christ has

an incredible offer for you. Jesus said this. It's a direct quote. *"If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens come to Me and I will give you rest for your soul."* Matthew 11:28-30

I like that verse because it says the exact opposite of what most people think God will say to them. They think that if God wants me to come home He's going to say "Come home to Me and I will give you my rules to follow. People think if God wants them to come home He's going to say to them, Come home to Me and I will give you regulations. Come home to Me and I will give you restrictions. Come home to Me and I will give you religion. Come home to Me and I will give you rituals." But God doesn't say any of those things. He says, *"Come home to Me and I will give you rest."* That sounds like a good deal – rest.

I gave you some other scriptures from God's word, the bible to look at yourself:

*"He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; He offers strength to the weak."* Isaiah 40:29 (NLT)

*"God will strengthen you with His own great power so that you will not give up when troubles come."*  
Colossians 1:11 (NCV)

*"When you lie down, you won't be afraid; you will sleep in peace and you won't worry about sudden disaster." Proverbs 3:24-25 (NCV/GN)*

If you come home to God at Christmas, you can expect to come home to His love and forgiveness, His peace and His strength and...

### **3. You will come home to His hope and His joy.**

Hope when situations seem hopeless in your life. And joy when you feel grief or sadness or depression. We need these. The Bible says in Romans 15 *"May God the source of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in*

*Him."* Circle "hope" and "joy" and "peace" and draw a line to "trust" because all three of those come from trusting God. The more I trust God, the more my life is filled with joy. The more I trust God, the more my life is filled with His peace. The more I trust God, the more my life is filled with hope. If I don't have hope, if I'm feeling hopeless, if I don't feel joyful, if I don't feel peaceful it means one thing: I am not trusting God. Because He is the source of all those things.

God's forgiveness takes care of your past – all of the things you've ever done are forgiven and washed away. God's peace and strength gives you help in the present. Then God's purpose and plan for your life gives you hope for the future. What a deal. Past, present, future.

Why did Jesus Christ come at Christmas? Because He didn't want to love you from a distance. He wanted to love you up close so He came to earth. God came to earth and became one of us so we could know what He was like. There are some things you can only do up close. Like hugging. You can't do that from a distance. And God wanted to love you up close so He came at Christmas.

Let me be really clear about this. Today I'm not inviting you to come home to religion. I am not even inviting you to come home to a church. I'm inviting you to come home to a person who made you, who loves you, who sent His Son to die for you. I'm inviting you to come home to God.

What I've shared is nothing complex. It's not real hard to understand. Any five year old can understand that I've just

talked about – come home to God. Come home to His love and forgiveness, come home to His peace and strength, come home to His hope and love. The real bottom line is are you going to take a small step of faith this Christmas and come home to God? Or are you going to let it bypass you another year and continue to celebrate the birth of somebody you have no connection to at all? That doesn't make sense. God wants you to come home to Him.

*“Right now God is ready to welcome you. Today He is ready to save you”* 2 Corinthians 6: 2. No matter who you are, no matter what you've done. I don't care if you're a religious person or a non religious person. I don't care if you're Catholic or Protestant, or Jewish or Buddhist or no religion. We're not talking about religion. We're talking about connecting to God. We're talking about a

relationship not a religion. You can come home to God and say, “God I want to come home to You and I want You to make Your home in my heart.”

One person wrote to me last Christmas:

Before ever coming to Christ, I always felt that there had to be more to life than what I was experiencing. There was a hole in my heart but I didn't want to admit it and I tried to fill it with all kinds of stuff. Then last Christmas I attended the Calvary Christmas service and at the end you invited us to pray a prayer and accept God's Christmas gift to us, God's Son Jesus Christ. So I followed you in that simple prayer of commitment. It seemed simple to me at the time but I knew I was doing the right thing and I now know it was the best decision I've ever made. I cannot

describe all of the good that's come out of this. I'm so much more happy and more joyful now.”

The Bible says that every time one person comes home to God – just one – they have a party in heaven. The Bible says in Luke 15 the angels rejoice and they throw a party in heaven when one person comes home to God. The angels are waiting to have your party.

Prayer:

I'm going to pray a prayer for you right now. Then I'm going to pray a prayer just like I prayed many years ago when I came home to God and you can follow me in it. What matters is your heart, not so much the words you say. You can maybe go “Me too, God”.

Father, there are people here today who have never begun relationship with You. They know about You. They just don't know You. They believe in God. They

just don't have a relationship with You. I pray that You will give them the courage to come home to You this Christmas.

Now you pray. Say something like this in your heart, in your mind. "Dear God I want to come home at Christmas, this Christmas. I don't understand it all but God, I want to come home to You. I'm tired of living without You. I want to come home to Your love and forgiveness. I need Your peace and strength in my life. Please, give me a new sense of hope about my future and joy as I trust You. Thank You for sending Jesus Christ at Christmas to pay for my sins. Help me to understand that more. As much as I know how I want to open up my life to You, Jesus, and I want to get to know You. Help me to understand and trust You from this day forward so I can

have a permanent home, a perfect home in heaven with You. Thank You. Amen.