

I. Introduction

- A. Merry Christmas.
- B. Welcome to Pathway. And welcome to the Christmas wonderland at Pathway. It's absolutely beautiful here.
- C. There is something wonderful about Christmas. There's a warmth. There's a beauty. Christmas lights everywhere. Christmas music. Christmas ornaments. There are ten thousand Hallmark movies.
- 1. You might have seen the ones I've seen: Career woman named Ivy/Holly/Mistletoe meets flannel-wearing farmer, cowboy, carpenter, prince, rediscovers Christmas, falls in love, has misunderstanding, stays in love, saves the family bakery, Christmas tree farm, or artisanal cookie shop just in time for the Gala, festival, pie baking contest, or tree-lighting ceremony. Cue snow machine. First kiss. Roll credits.
- D. It's genius.
- E. As a kid growing up in Chicago, I found Christmas magical, full of presents under the tree, snow, Christmas breaks and family.
- F. Christmas was magical.
- G. Even for friends who might not call themselves Christians, there's still something wonderful about Christmas. It's like comfort food for the soul; even if you don't believe, it's still hard to resist.
- H. I think there's a deep reason we're all drawn to that magic. It's because that feeling of wonder is an echo of a deeper quest we're all on. Let me say it this way...

1. Deep in every human heart, we're all searching for a HOME worth inhabiting, a RESCUE worth welcoming, and a LOVE worth finding.

- I. That's the quest. That's human nature. It's the human heart. I am saying we're built for this search. Emotionally. Psychologically. Spiritually.
- J. This search for ultimate meaning is so strong that even when people don't want to hold onto God or Jesus, they'll still hold onto Christmas.
- K. I want to suggest today that the best thing any of us can ever do in our lives is to once for all fully embrace Christmas in its original and fullest meaning.

II. Heads Up

- A. And that original and fullest meaning is that the Savior is born, and that Savior is God, who came into the world as a human, without ceasing to be God.
- B. He came to be not only *the* Savior, but *your* Savior. And if you embrace him as your Savior, you will find he is radically unlike any other influencer ever on earth. Jesus came on Christmas Day not to take anything from you, but rather to give you the very thing you've been looking for all your days.
- C. And when you have your own "come to Jesus moment," that is exactly what he will do for you, and so much more.
- D. I'm actually praying that you might have a "come to Jesus" moment today.
 - 1. So I want to give you a little heads up. Because I'm not only going to talk about Christmas and Jesus. I'm actually going to invite you to receive him today.
- E. I want to talk you through how to make it official, so that this Christmas will literally be your first Christmas in God's family.
- F. I'll explain that, and then, if you're willing, I'll talk you through it.
- G. Don't worry, it won't be weird, and I won't single you out.

III. Scripture

- A. In one of the ancient prophecies of Christmas, half a millennium before Christ was born, God speaks through a prophet. He literally predicts the city where Jesus will be born. Here's that prophecy; God is speaking through Micah the prophet:
 - 1. *"But you, Bethlehem, though you are little among the thousands of cities of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."* (Micah 5:2)
- B. This is a pretty remarkable prophecy, for three main reasons.
 - 1. First, it predicts the city: Bethlehem—which is our story for next week.
 - 2. Second, it predicts His role: a Ruler—our story in two weeks.
 - 3. But the third reason that makes this remarkable is the one we have to understand today...
- C. The prophet says that Jesus came into this world in a way unlike any other person. For everyone of us, you have a mom, you have a dad, you're born. That's your beginning. That's your starting line.
 - 1. But not for Jesus. The prophet says, "His goings are from of old, from everlasting." That means that Jesus is the only person whose existence precedes his birthday.
 - 2. When he was born on Christmas Day, that was *not* his beginning.
- D. In other words, long before Jesus ever had a home on earth in Bethlehem, he was at home in heaven as God.
- E. And that is the home I would like to talk about today. Because if you really want to understand the WHY behind Christmas, you have to understand where Jesus came from (heaven) and what that means to us.
- F. For those of us who are Christians, we believe that God is everywhere. He fills all of space and time and beyond all the time. However, we also believe that heaven is the place where God makes his presence specially known. And if there is one verse in the Bible that really captures the heart and soul of what it means to be in heaven, I believe it's this one:
 - 1. *"In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."* (Psalm 16:11)
- G. If you could bottle that and sell it, how much do you think you could charge?
 - 1. Perfect joy. Perfect peace. Perfect pleasure. Happiness. Freedom. Love. Goodness. Beauty. Harmony. Fullness. Rest. Fun. Adventure. Honor. Glory. Kindness. Affection. Warmth. Closeness. Power. Reality. Smiles. Feasting. Purpose. And on and on...
- H. Everything a heart could want and even the things you want, but can't yet imagine you want, all of that and so much more is waiting in the presence of God.

1. And look how long it lasts... forevermore.

I. That is heaven.

J. And that is where Jesus lived before his first birthday.

K. I think that most of us get the idea that on Christmas, Jesus was born into a very low condition. No room in the inn. Humble virgin Mary. Laid in a manger. He came to a place that was extremely low.

L. But I'd like us to really understand that he came from a place that was extremely high. Let's just go to the source and see 6 amazing wonders of heaven.

IV. Heaven: 6 Amazing Wonders

A. **Breathtaking Beauty**

1. *"The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve precious stones: the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass."* (Revelation 21:19-21)

B. **Ultimate Healing**

1. *"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."* (Revelation 21:4)
2. *"Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations."* (Revelation 22:1-2)

C. **Dazzling Brightness**

1. *"I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light."* (Revelation 21:22-23)

D. **Transcendent Worship**

1. *"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!'* (Revelation 19:6)

E. **Boundless Love**

1. *"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."* (1 John 3:1-2)

F. **Inexpressible Joy**

1. *"...Jesus, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."* (1 Peter 1:8)

G. That was the world Jesus knew. That was the home Jesus inhabited.

H. But it's not only that.

1. That is the home you were created for.
2. In fact, I would say that every longing, every ache, every desire is a memory of that place. It's an echo of the ideal paradise your heart was created for. Realize it or not, it's the place your heart is restless for.

I. King Solomon wrote that God has put "eternity in our hearts" (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

J. Today, God is calling you home.

K. That's why you came to church today. That's why you're hearing these words. Christmas means something to you because heaven is calling you home... in ways you sense but don't understand.

1. And it's the connection I am hoping to reestablish with you today. This is that "come to Jesus" moment that I mentioned earlier. We'll get there in just a few minutes.
2. Don't worry it won't be weird.

V. The Homing Instinct

A. In the world of nature, there is a bird with a superpower that has baffled scientists for centuries. It's the **homing pigeon**, and its ability to find its way home is nothing short of a biological miracle.

B. You can take a trained homing pigeon, put it in a light-proof box, drive it 500, even 1,000 miles in a random direction to a place it has never been, and release it. And with an unshakeable, single-minded focus, it will turn toward home and begin to fly. It will fly through storms. It will fly over mountains. It will fly past predators. It will fly for however long it takes until it arrives at the one specific place it belongs.

C. For years, scientists asked, "How?" They still don't know everything. But they do know it's not one thing, but a whole suite of sophisticated navigational tools.

1. They have a sun compass to orient themselves by the time of day.
2. They can perceive the Earth's magnetic field, an invisible map of force lines they can feel in their very being.
3. Many scientists believe they even navigate by smell, creating a complex "olfactory map" of their home.
4. They can detect ultra-low frequency sounds that travel for hundreds of miles, using echo-location from coastlines and mountain ranges as sound beacons.

D. But even knowing all that doesn't explain the most powerful part: the *instinct*. The relentless, unyielding, internal *pull*.

E. It is a compulsion woven into its very being that says one thing: "Home. I must get home."

F. That powerful, unexplainable instinct in the pigeon is a physical picture of a spiritual reality inside of you.

G. You have a homing instinct. It's that ache in your heart, that restlessness you feel even when things are good, that sense that you were made for a place you've never seen.

- H. That feeling isn't a flaw; it's a feature. It's a gift, a spiritual magnetic field pulling you back toward the God who made you. It is the one home truly worth inhabiting.
- I. It's a homesickness for glory you were designed for.
- J. I believe the main reason you are here today is that you, in your own way, are responding to that instinct: "Home. I must get home."
 1. Deep in every human heart, we're all searching for a home worth inhabiting.
 2. Deep in every human heart, we're all homesick. We're homesick for heaven.

VI. CS Lewis

- A. The most epic storyline in literature, arts, and Scripture is the wayward child finding their way back home.
- B. C.S. Lewis said:
 1. **"If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world."**
- C. We are made for another world.
- D. CS Lewis did not come to this conclusion easily; he called himself England's most reluctant convert.
- E. Lewis, was a brilliant Oxford professor, a man whose mind was his fortress. He has become a staunch, convinced atheist.
 1. He said that this was because of the pain he felt over his mother's tragic death when he was a boy... and this was only hardened when he fought in the brutal trenches of WW1 and saw the horrors there.
 2. He believed that the universe was a cold, meaningless place, and that any talk of God was childish fantasy. His goal wasn't to find God; it was to live a life of intellectual honesty without Him.
- F. But God, it seemed, had other plans. Lewis described it not as a search, but as a pursuit.
- G. Even as an atheist, he could never shake God.
- H. He would be reading ancient mythology or old Norse poems and suddenly be pierced by a feeling he called "Joy"—a sharp, inconsolable longing for something beautiful and far-off. He would try to dismiss it, but it kept returning. He called God "the Divine chess player," who was slowly, patiently, and masterfully maneuvering him toward a spiritual checkmate.
- I. The final moves came through his friendship with a fellow professor. I bet you've heard of him: J.R.R. Tolkien.
- J. One night, Lewis, Tolkien, and another friend walked and talked for hours under the stars at Oxford. Tolkien argued that the story of Jesus was the one "true myth"—a story that actually happened in history and fulfilled all the deepest longings found in all the myths that Lewis loved so deeply. The story of Jesus wasn't just beautiful; it was real.
- K. This conversation was the final tug. Lewis realized that his atheism, which he thought was so rational, was actually wishful thinking. He had been hoping the universe was empty so he could remain in control.
 1. The homing signal he had felt his whole life in books, music, and nature was undeniable. In his room at Oxford, he finally gave in. In his own words, he described himself as "the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England." He said, "I admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed." It wasn't a burst of emotion, but the humble newfound faith of a man who had been lovingly, patiently, and relentlessly tugged home.
- L. The essence of the human heart is its built in homing instinct for heaven.
- M. God designed you with all kinds of warning signals when you go off course.
 1. You feel hollow after a great success.
 2. You feel empty when the party ends.
 3. You feel lonely in a crowded room.
 4. You feel an ache over a beautiful song.
 5. You feel regret for a habit you hate.
 6. You feel shame over a choice you made.
 7. You feel tired of the life you've got.
 8. You feel sad when everything's good.
- N. Those feelings are not flaws.
- O. Those feelings are features of a fully functioning heart.
- P. They are God-given warning lights of a trajectory off course.
- Q. You're designed that way.
- R. Those feelings are not signs that you are broken beyond repair.
 1. They are signs that you were made for more.
 2. They are symptoms that you are homesick for heaven.
- S. They are calls to reclaim your inheritance, to reclaim your birthright, to come to Jesus that you might come home to heaven.

VII. Come to Jesus

- A. I started by saying, **"Deep in every human heart, we're all searching for a HOME worth inhabiting..."**
- B. That home is heaven. Jesus opened the way. That's why he came, and that's why we have Christmas.
- C. He left his home in first heaven. Made his second home on earth, here, where he died for your sins and rose again.
 1. All so he can make his third home in your heart... literally today.
- D. You say, "How does that happen?"
 1. You simply receive Jesus and the gifts he brings by faith.
- E. You say, "How?"
 1. Actually, the simplest way is a prayer of faith.
- F. You say, "What do I say in that prayer?"
 1. That's where I want to help you. In a moment, I'm going to ask you to bow your head and close your eyes...

2. I'm going to say a prayer of faith, a prayer of salvation, line by line. If you're ready to come home today, you can repeat these lines silently to God, right in your heart.

VIII. Prayer

- A. Our pattern is ABC... so let's all bow our heads and close our eyes it's time to pray.
 1. ADMIT: God, I admit I am far from home. I've gone my own way. I've missed the mark. I have sinned. I've been trying to find my way on my own, and I am lost. I need you to save me.
 2. BELIEVE: Jesus, I believe you are the way home. I believe you left the glory of heaven and came to earth on Christmas Day to rescue me. I believe you died on the cross. I believe you paid for my sins. I believe you rose again. I believe you opened the door for me to come home to God. Jesus, you are the way. You are the only way. I believe.
 3. CHOOSE: So right now, Jesus, I choose you. I choose to receive you. I embrace you. I welcome you. I know you are the Savior; today I ask you to be MY Savior. Please save me. Please forgive me. Please make me your child forever. Amen.