

I. Welcome

- A. Welcome to Pathway and Home for Christmas.
- B. We are so glad you're here, as we remember the season and its reason. I'm inviting you to think with me about the topic, Christ's Three Homes.
 - 1. His Heavenly home, in eternity, last weekend.
 - 2. His Earthly home, in Bethlehem, our topic today.
 - 3. His Spiritual home, in your heart, for next weekend.
- C. Because there is so much going on, and so many different meanings about Christmas, it's really good just to take some time out, and stop. And say... "Let's go back to the original script."
- D. What did the original script actually say.
- E. Here it is:

II. Christmas

- 1. *"And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were sore afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. "And this shall be a sign unto you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."*

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger." (Luke 2:1-16)

III. Christmas

- A. The only true historical reason for celebrating Christmas is as the birthday of Jesus Christ.
- B. In this Christmas season, we remember the day when God became human without ceasing to be God.
- C. When we go back to the original script, we learn that there was great meaning for Jesus, when he came into his earthly home.
- D. What did it mean for Jesus to leave behind his home in heaven, that he might make a home on earth?
- E. Think with me about FIVE MEANINGS Jesus found in coming to his earthly home.

IV. FIVE MEANINGS OF CHRIST'S EARTHLY HOME**A. His earthly home meant SACRIFICE.**

- 1. Jesus sacrificed the comfort of heaven to come to a nasty world that didn't welcome him, didn't acknowledge him, and didn't want him.
- 2. He came because he loved you. And I know you've heard that a million times, but I'll bet you have no idea how tough and costly that love really was for him. It was an all in kind of love.
 - a) Jesus didn't come here to dip his toe in the water. He came and burned the boats. He severed the tie to safety. He left the ease of heaven to do the hard work of saving you.
- 3. His love for you is a rough, tough, costly, manly, epic, self generated, willing, free, living, giving, dying, steady, unbreakable, unshakable, unreasonable kind of love.
 - a) There's nothing like it.
- 4. There's no greater love than to give up your life for your friends, Jesus said. And that's what he did.
 - a) He sacrificed his dignity.
 - b) He sacrificed his rights.
 - c) He sacrificed his glory.
 - d) He sacrificed his comforts.
 - e) He sacrificed his pain free existence, that he might step into this cold cruel world that didn't want him, and killed him as soon as they could.

5. The Ruler of the Stars was laid in a manger beneath the stars, on the day that mankind's Maker was made human.
6. Why would he endure this great sacrifice?
7. He did all this for you. Because he loved you, Jesus Christ sacrificed his heavenly home, and embraced an earthly home that would soon put him to death, that he might open a spiritual home in your heart for him.
8. And my hope is that you will make Christ at home in your heart, even today.
9. I think you are here today for reasons you don't even begin to fully understand.
10. And the chief of those reasons is that you would finally cross a line you've been resisting all your life. That you would come to Jesus. I want to show you how to do it. I won't embarrass you or single you out.
11. Almighty God brought you that you might be saved. And I'm going to guide you through a simple prayer of salvation at the end of my talk today.
12. So what did his earthly home mean to Jesus?
13. It meant sacrifice.
14. It also meant...

B. His earthly home meant LIMITATION.

1. The largest known living single-stem tree on Earth is a Sequoia called the General Sherman, here in California. It stands 275 feet tall, is over 36 feet in diameter, and weighs an estimated 2.7 million pounds.
2. Yet, that massive organism began its life inside a seed the size of a snowflake. To get from the "General Sherman" to the seed, you have to imagine compressing 2.7 million pounds of living matter, miles of root systems, and two thousand, five hundred years of growth into a casing no bigger than a grain of sand. The genetic code is there, the life is there... but the glory, the size, the majesty, the beauty... the destiny are completely hidden and compressed.
3. For Jesus, Christmas meant limitation we can't fathom.
 - a) The God who fills the Universe—the One whom "heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain"—compressed His infinite nature into the microscopic zygote in Mary's womb. He didn't stop being God, just as the seed doesn't stop being a Sequoia, but He accepted a limitation so severe it is almost impossible to comprehend.
 - b) The One whose knowledge base isn't even scratched by the most advanced AI, the one who knows all the knowable and unknowable and can parse all the ripple effects of a butterfly's wing — that One compressed himself to a human IQ.
 - c) The One whose presence fills all of space, whose infinite being fills every finite point in the space time continuum and beyond, that One limited himself to a human body.
 - d) The One whose power raises up mountains and whose hand spun galaxies into orbit and wove dark matter into the fabric of creation, that One compressed himself to the helplessness of a newborn babe.
 - e) The One whose name is written on the deed to heaven's vaults, whose hand holds the key to treasures of gold and silver, the rightful heir to the collected wealth of heaven and earth, that One limited himself to the poverty of a poor, afflicted family, so poor he was born in a barn, and used a manger, a trough, for his crib.
4. It takes massive power to hold back massive power. From the manger to the grave and beyond, there wasn't a day in the life of Jesus where he didn't possess enough power in his little finger to destroy his enemies, defeat the powers of darkness, punish evildoers, and unveil such glory that the universe couldn't help but fall on its face and adoration and praise.
5. Yet, he held all that back. He kept it in. He used massive power to hold back massive power.
6. Christmas is far more than a children's holiday. Far more than a sentimental movie or pretty decorations. It is the epic tale of a man who came, the sacrifice he made, and the invitation he offers even today. What will you say?
7. I hope you're getting the idea today that there is nobody like Jesus.

C. His earthly home meant PAIN.

1. Here is one way the Bible describes heaven:
 - a) *"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. If that's the picture of life in heaven, then what's the picture of life on earth? It's the opposite of all those things.
3. Not the absence, but the presence of: Tears. Death. Sorrow. Crying. And pain.
 - a) Christmas tells us that Jesus left behind a home where those things weren't and moved into a home where those things were.

4. One of the most clarifying lessons God has revealed in the Bible is something about this world: this fallen world is a morally broken pain machine.
5. For Jesus Christ to have left heaven — when he didn't have to — to step into the giant pain machine — when he didn't have to — is undeniable proof of his grit and grace and of his love for you.
6. He didn't run from the pain. He didn't run from the darkness. He embraced the suffering to introduce you to your salvation.
7. He accepted the pain of sin and death, that he might obliterate the pain of sin and death from you for ever and ever.
8. And he will do that, if you will only receive him.
 - a) You may feel unlovable today. He loves you with an everlasting love.
 - b) You may be sure you have crossed a point of no return. There is no sin so deep he can't forgive, and no prodigal so lost he won't redeem.
 - c) You may feel rich or comfortable or decent, moral, and good today. You need a Savior, because you are not as good as you think you are, and you have no wealth or success that can afford the treasures of heaven.
 - (1) No matter how high you've risen or how low you've fallen, Christmas means that Jesus came for you.
9. He came to lift away your pain, to ease your crying, to comfort your sorrow, to die your death, and to wipe away every tear from your eyes.
10. And he will do that if you only believe in him as your Savior. And you can do that. You can tell God today that you are receiving Jesus. I will show you how in just a few more minutes.
11. Christ's earthly home meant sacrifice. It meant limitation. It meant pain.
12. And its fourth meaning this:

D. His earthly home meant DEATH.

1. I'm saying that this fallen world is a morally broken pain machine, but it wasn't always a morally broken pain machine. This is not the world God made. The world God made was a paradise. It was a good and very good world.
2. Until that terrible, horrible, no good very bad day when sin came in.
3. This is the root cause of the fallenness. This is the root cause of the brokenness. This is the root cause of everything that's wrong in your life and your world.
4. And this is exactly why Jesus came, and this is why he died.
5. He came into the world, not just to deal with the symptoms, but to deal with the root cause of it all.
 - a) The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.
 - b) The human heart is infected by sin and therefore resistant to the love of God.
6. Christ came to not only fix the symptoms but to change the heart.
7. And that required his death. It was the only way.
 - a) *"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."* (Hebrews 2:14, 15).
8. Why Christmas?
 - a) Jesus came because the world's root problem of sin (with all its symptoms) could only be solved by death, so he had to become human so he could die.
 - b) But in order for that death to have infinite value, for all the sins of all mankind for all of time and eternity, he had to be God so he could present an offering of infinite worth.
9. And the beautiful thing about all of this is that you don't have to understand it all. You can receive Jesus, and still have questions. Still have misunderstandings. You can even still have doubts.
10. It is enough to believe that Jesus was born, lived, died, and rose again to reconcile God and sinners, which includes you. And then to deliberately choose him.
11. Your turn is coming.

E. His earthly home meant SALVATION.

1. In the climax of Victor Hugo's masterpiece, *Les Misérables*, the young revolutionary Marius is shot and falls unconscious. He is bleeding out and certain to die. Jean Valjean, the hero, knows that the only way to save Marius is to carry him out. But the streets above are blocked by soldiers and certain death.
2. Valjean makes a desperate choice. He lifts the unconscious body of Marius onto his shoulders, pries open a heavy iron grate, and descends into the sewers of Paris. Hugo describes this place as the "intestine of the Leviathan"—a dark, terrifying underworld.

3. Valjean leaves the fresh air and light of the city to wade into a labyrinth of slime. It is a place of absolute darkness, where the mire reaches his knees, and then his waist. He trudges through the thick, suffocating stench of the city's waste, surrounded by rats and decay. At one point, he sinks into a patch of quicksand-like mud, barely keeping his chin—and the boy—above the filth.
 4. For hours, he struggles in this suffocating darkness, his strength failing, gasping for air in the gloom. He willingly immersed himself in the muck, carrying the heavy weight of a dying man, because he knew that the only path to life lay through the sewer.
 5. That is a vivid picture of the Incarnation of Christ. When we talk about Jesus' "earthly home," we often picture a cozy stable. But compared to the pristine purity and light of Heaven, this fallen world was a sewer of sin and death.
 6. Jesus didn't stay in the fresh air of glory.
 - a) He pried open the grate of history and descended. He waded into the mire of our broken humanity.
 - b) He let the filth of your sin and mine touch His life.
 - c) He carried the dead weight of our souls through the darkness of the cross.
 - d) He endured the "sewer" of this earthly home because He knew it was the only way to bring us out into the light of salvation.
- F. Jesus descended into darkness. While you're sleeping he did the hard work. While you're playing, he's in the muck and mire, doing the heavy lifting. He didn't ask for a spotlight. He didn't ask for applause.
- G. He didn't ask for repayment or anything in return.
- H. He came to give, not to take.
- I. He came to save his people from their sins.
- V. Come to Jesus
- A. And that is the invitation today. This invitation is not a suggestion. It's a wake up call. If you leave here without him, and if Christmas is real, you're choosing a legacy of regret.
 - B. You've thought about it. You've ignored it. You've analyzed it. You've dissected it. You've objected to it. Why wait another day? Why leave here without him, again?
 - C. I'm going to ask you to bow your head and close your eyes...
 1. 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.
 2. It's choice time. You can do whatever you want.

VI. Prayer

A. Our pattern is ABC...

1. ADMIT: God, I admit I've been running my own life, and I've hit a dead end. I have sinned. I have missed the standard. I admit that I cannot fix my own soul and I cannot muscle my way into heaven. I am spiritually bankrupt, and I own that truth right now. I need a Savior.
2. BELIEVE: Jesus, I believe You are the Champion who fought the battle for me. I believe You left the comfort of heaven to enter the trenches for me. You took the hit. You paid my debt in full on the cross. You conquered the grave. You did the work I could never do. I believe You are the Victor, and I am pinning all my faith on You.
3. CHOOSE: So right now, Jesus, I am going all in. I choose You. I stop fighting and I start trusting. I say yes. I receive the gift You died to give me. You are the Savior; today I claim You as MY Savior. Save me. Forgive me. I am Yours, forever. Amen.