

I. Introduction

- A. Merry Christmas and welcome to Pathway.
- B. And welcome to our very special series called Home. Home for Christmas.
- C. Christmas means that Jesus has three homes:
 - 1. His Eternal Home in Heaven.
 - 2. His Earthly Home in Bethlehem.
 - 3. His Spiritual Home in Your Heart.
- D. I always like us to go to the source, so let's look at the original script, from 3 perspectives.
- E. The Gospel of Matthew shows us Joseph's perspective:
 - 1. *"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph... was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.' So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'Behold, the Virgin shall be with a child, and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God with us.'" (Matthew 1:18-23)*
- F. He was born to be with us. God with us.
- G. But as the story continues, there's a problem because not everyone chooses in favor of having God with us.
- H. The Gospel of Luke shows Mary's perspective:
 - 1. *"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!... Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.' (Luke 1:26-31)*
 - 2. *"So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed 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." (Luke 2:6-7)*
- I. So Mary heard, Joseph heard, the shepherds heard, King Herod heard, wise men a thousand miles away heard... that the Savior was born. Then St John pulls back the curtain and tell the same story, from heaven's perspective:
 - 1. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:1, 14)*
- J. All of that is the WHAT of Christmas:
 - 1. Christmas is the day when God became human without ceasing to be God. He came, the Bible says, to dwell among us.
 - 2. Actually, this phrase "dwelt among us" literally means, he came to "pitch his tent" among us. To live where we live, to camp out where we camp out.
 - 3. He left the palace of heaven for a manger—and then, for the mess and ache inside your heart. Who does that? Only a Love worth finding, greater than anything you've ever known. That is the WHAT of Christmas.
- K. That also explains the WHY of Christmas:
 - 1. He came so he could SAVE his people from their SINS.
 - 2. A holy God dwelling among sinful people would be a contradiction. So Christmas launched the solution to that contradiction.
- L. And then John continues with the HOW of Christmas:
 - 1. *"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." (John 1:11-12)*
- M. There is a kind of formula in this text for the true meaning of Christmas. I want to come back to that.
- N. But do notice that when he came, some did not believe him. Some did not receive him.
- O. When Jesus came, there was no room for him in the Inn.
- P. There's a lesser known Christmas carol from 1864 with these beautiful lyrics:
 - 1. Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown,
When Thou camest to earth for me;
But in Bethlehem's home was there found no room
For Thy holy nativity.

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
There is room in my heart for Thee.
(Emily E. Elliott, 1864)

II. Head's Up

- A. I believe that there are reasons why you're here today that you don't even know.
 - 1. Somebody loves you.
 - 2. Somebody's been praying for you.
 - 3. God is calling you home.
- B. So my goal for this talk today is to explain what it means to make your heart Christ's home.
- C. And this is a little heads up.
- D. I'm not just going to explain what it means, I am going to invite you to receive him for yourself today. Don't worry it won't be weird. I will not single you out. But at the end, I want to walk you through a prayer in which you personally and officially receive Jesus.
- E. And this takes me back to the formula I mentioned.

III. The Formula

- A. The formula has four parts, and they all come from this statement:
 - 1. *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."* (John 1:12)
- B. The formula goes like this:
 - 1. **Him + Believe + Receive = Become**
- C. I'm going to take these factors one at a time because this is really the heartbeat of what Christmas is all about.

IV. The Factors

A. Him

- 1. Every human heart craves a little magic, a little mystery, something that goes beyond the mundane, boring two dimensional world.
- 2. That is why even people who don't accept Christianity still hold onto Christmas. The season. The music. The decorations. Christmas trees. Gifts.
 - a) But according to the formula:
 - (1) **If you subtract Jesus from Christmas, you miss the main thing.**
- 3. You have to receive HIM. You have to believe in HIM, in HIS name.
- 4. In the ancient world, to talk about somebody's name was to talk about their identity. The core of their being and essence.
- 5. And what is the core of the being and essence of Jesus?
- 6. The angels told us.
 - a) The angels told the Shepherds that a Savior was born.
 - b) The angel Gabriel told Joseph that he would save his people from their sins.
 - c) He is Christ. He is the Lord. He is God with us.
 - d) But the heart and soul of everything is that Jesus is the Savior, and specifically the Savior from our sins.
- 7. That's the "him." That's Jesus.
- 8. That is why Jesus came. That is why God became human. According to the original Christmas story he had to; there was no other way to solve the contradiction of a holy God and less-than-holy people dwelling together.
- 9. And all of this put Jesus completely in the class by himself. There is nobody like him. No one is even close.
- 10. H.G. Wells
 - a) H.G. Wells was a famous historian and author (known for The War of the Worlds, The Time Machine, the Invisible Man), and he was notably not a Christian. When writing his massive work, The Outline of History, he attempted to analyze history from a purely secular perspective.
 - b) When he came to the subject of Jesus, H.G. Wells wrote:
 - (1) "I am an historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history."
 - c) When asked who left the greatest legacy on mankind, he replied, "By this test Jesus stands first."
- 11. The very fact that millions of people are in gatherings all around the world celebrating Jesus's birth is just another proof.

12. I am saying that Jesus is the nonnegotiable factor in the true meaning of Christmas. He is the “him.” His name is the only name that saves. He is the content. He is the sum and substance. He is the essence.
13. And if you want the true meaning of Christmas to flood into your life, you must come to terms with HIM.
14. And what I am inviting you to do today is this: you can bring this same Jesus into your life and your heart – and along with him, all the incredible gifts he brings – today.

B. Believe

1. According to St. John and the Christmas formula he reveals, Jesus stands forth as the Savior, but only of those who BELIEVE.
2. So BELIEVE is the second non-negotiable factor in the Christmas message.
3. It is not enough to simply believe in belief. Faith in faith, never saved anybody.
4. The call for you today is to declare your faith in Jesus, and specifically in his identity as the Savior, and as YOUR Savior, from your sins.
5. There's a powerful part of the Christmas story when a very old man named Simeon spoke to Mary. Simeon had just met baby Jesus. He knew who he was. He knew what was going to happen.
6. Simeon spoke prophetically about Jesus and his salvation. He also made a dark prediction about Mary. He said:
 - a) *“Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also.”* (Luke 2:35).
7. He was referring to the heartbreak that Mary would feel when she saw her own son crucified.
8. The heart of everything that Jesus did and meant and believed and achieved happened on that dark day.
9. There is a straight line from Christmas to Good Friday, the day Jesus died.
 - a) He came into the world; that's Christmas.
 - b) He saved his people from their sins when he died on the cross; that's Good Friday.
10. If you're going to believe in Jesus, there's really no other Jesus than the one the Bible presents to us.
11. CS Lewis said this best:
 - a) I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. ~C.S. Lewis
12. In a few moments, when I invite you to believe in Jesus, it will be to believe in him as the only one who could ever save you from your sins. As the only one who could ever reconcile you to God.

C. Receive

1. Word means to welcome or to embrace somebody into your home. That is the invitation today. That you would welcome Jesus into your life. That, in a spiritual and mystical way no one can really explain, that you would make your heart Christ's home.
2. Believing is mostly something that happens in your mind, where you think.
 - a) You acknowledge that certain facts are true. That happens in your mind. Christ died for your sins. I believe.
3. Receiving is mostly something that happens in your will, where you choose.
 - a) Your power of choice, your free will.
 - b) So you believe in his name, his identity, just as he is.
 - c) And you receive him, just as he is. And he'll receive you, just as you are.
4. It's not enough to believe something about Jesus, but to never receive him.
 - a) Even Napoleon did that.
5. Napoleon
 - a) Reflecting on his own life of conquest compared to the ministry of Jesus, Napoleon said:
 - (1) "Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded his empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for him."
6. Here is a man who believed in the facts, but never Received the person. He never said his yes to Jesus.
7. That is what I am praying against today.
8. So the formula says: Believe + Receive + Him = Become

D. Become

1. *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:"* (John 1:12)
2. The unbreakable promise of God says when you believe in him, and receive him, you become something.
3. You become a child of God.
 - a) It becomes your right; it says so right here. You get this authority, this power, and this right to become a child of God.
4. This is why when someone tells me they just received Jesus as their savior, I say Welcome to the family of God. This isn't religion. This is family.
5. What does it mean to become a child of God?
 - a) It means your past can't hold you hostage.
 - b) It means your name is written heaven.
 - c) It means that you belong.
 - d) It means that you call God your "Father"—and he calls you "my child".
 - e) It means you are heir to the riches of heaven.
 - f) It means every heartache finds hope, every wound finds healing.
 - g) It means your failures are forgotten, your sins are erased, and all that's left is your beauty, your power, your authority, your glory, your honor, and your worth.
 - h) And it means that even after all the long ages of eternity have rolled on and on, you will still be loved, still be known, still be welcomed, and still bask in the length and width and depth and height of the love of God which passes knowledge.

V. Prep for Prayer

- A. You may think this is just another Christmas service, another holiday routine. But what if today is anything but routine.
- B. Maybe you've spent your whole life being told there's no room for you, you're too broken, too late, too much. But tonight, God says, "There's room in my heart for you... won't you make room in your heart for me?"
- C. Let's not just talk about this. Let's do it. In a moment, I'll offer a sample prayer you can make your own—a way to stop being just a face in the crowd and start being a son, a daughter, in the royal and everlasting family of God.

VI. One Solitary Life

- A. But before we get there, one of the threads through my message today is that Jesus is one of a kind. There is an incredible statement about this from a sermon in 1926, and before we pray, I wanted to share this with you. It's called One Solitary Life.
 1. **He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village, where He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty. Then for three years, He was an itinerant preacher.**
 2. **He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a home. He didn't go to college. He never visited a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself.**
 3. **He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While He was dying, His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth—His coat. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.**
 4. **Nineteen long centuries have come and gone, and today He is the centerpiece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever were built, all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that One Solitary Man.**
 - a) **Dr. James Allan Francis, pastor, 1926.**

VII. Prayer**A. Our pattern is ABC...**

1. (A) ADMIT: Dear God, I need you. My heart is not your home yet. I have sinned. I have kept you out. I cannot fix this by myself. I need you to be my Savior.
2. (B) BELIEVE: I believe Jesus is your Son. He came from his home in heaven for me. He died on the cross for my sins. He paid my price in full. He rose from the dead to give me new life. I believe he is my only way to you.
3. (C) CHOOSE: So right now, I choose you, Jesus. I open the door of my heart to you. Pitch your tent in my soul forever. I'm asking you right now, God please save me. Please forgive me. Please make me your child forever. Amen.