

## I'll Be Home For Christmas... in Jerusalem

Do you know what your plans for Christmas are yet? Where will you be? Who will you be with? **Where is "home" for you on Christmas?**

I remember being "home" for Christmas in 2 very different contexts...

- Mom... Ohio... Winter... Christmas Eve... Church... Jesus...
- Dad... Florida... Hot... Christmas morning... Santa...

Do you remember the movie "4 Christmases" ... One couple, spending Christmas in 4 very different locations, with 4 very different kinds of people (family), experiencing Christmas in 4 very different ways?

**What does being "home for Christmas" look like for you?**

Have you ever wondered what being "home" for Christmas may have been like in Jesus' day... for those areas surrounding the place where Jesus was born... Jerusalem... The East... Egypt... Nazareth... Bethlehem...?

This sermon series will look at what it might have been like to call one of these places' "home", and to be celebrating the advent of Jesus there.

This sermon series will also explore what "the transforming love of Jesus" might bring to similar places today that we call "home for the holidays"!

**JERUSALEM... What do we know about this city?**

- It was the center of religious expression for God's people... but it was also the place where the presence of Jesus was both missed & rejected!

**John 1:9-11 – "... He was in the world... yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his people did not receive him."**

- It was a place filled with much religious activity... but much of it was void of any real relational connection with God!

**Matthew 7:22 – "On that day many will say to me 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do mighty works in your name? And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you...'"**

**Matthew 15:1-9 – "... This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."**

- It was a place of much religious power and influence... but that power &

influence was used to divide, reject, and oppress people!

**Matthew 23:3-4 – "... For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, & lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger..."**

- It was the city of God's people... but also the city where Jesus, God's Son, was crucified!

**Matthew 23:37 – "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets & stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together... and you were not willing."**

Can you imagine coming home to such a place to celebrate Jesus' birth? If He was rejected & crucified there, how would they respond to us His followers?

None of us live in Jerusalem, but I wonder if the places we come home to for Christmas may resemble Jerusalem in some ways? Are our homes ever...

- **Full of religious expression... yet the presence of Jesus is missing there?**

If Jesus Himself attended our holiday gatherings, would He feel at home, or would he feel as if he was a stranger in our home?

- **Filled with so much activity... that there is no time left for real relational connection with God, or with one-another though our bond in Christ?**

Jesus may be the reason for the holiday, but is he at the center of our celebrations? Would it be obvious that we're celebrating Him this season?

- **Full of traditions... yet void of any real form of transformation?**

Our homes may be well decorated, our schedules full, & our Christmas checklists checked off, but are we ever left asking, "Why?" "For what...?"

Sometimes, our homes too closely resemble Jerusalem... The question is, what are we willing to do about it? How can the love & presence of Jesus transform lives in "Jerusalem-like" homes this Christmas season?

- **Focus on Jesus**, not just all the religious & festive activities of the season
- **Live like Jesus**, not like those who desire power & prestige in this world
- **Commune with God**, not with Santa! Share with Him your heart...
- **Give, and receive, the gift of Jesus this Christmas season...**

If this holiday season comes & goes without leaving a lasting impact, then we missed what this time of remembrance & celebration is really all about!