

Coming Home: Come Down Here

Presented By Pastor Scott Walters on 12/1/19
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Something we often associate with the Season of Advent is the idea of coming home. Just before Advent, kids come home from school and college for Thanksgiving Break. Families get together—if not at Thanksgiving—sometime during the holidays

And no matter how old we get, there is that tendency to remember home and family and parents--for good and for bad--this time of year.

Even now some of you can recall from Friday night, the Seraphim singing the familiar tune of Bing Crosby's voice singing, "I'll be home for Christmas."

The idea of "coming home" for Christmas is going to be our theme as we move through the Season of Advent together.

Prayer of Illumination

Temptation of finding Christmas presents as a child (5th grade).

Which is different than a quote from a short story of John Steinbeck in which a young man purchases a ruby jewel pendant and says to his new wife, "My joy requires a symbol."

There is no temptation because it was a pure gift, without any Expectations

Isaiah is the great prophet of preparation - we quote him all the time during the season, and we often times use the more hopeful passages from Isaiah. As we get ready for Christmas, we hear from the parts were Isaiah tells us that we are awaiting one who will be called by the Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, Everlasting Father the Prince of Peace.

But in today's passage, Isaiah's preparation looks very different, Isaiah prepares us for the savior by reminding us that everything is not okay. Isaiah almost pleads with God, come down. We need you. I need you.

At this point, when Isaiah said these words, the People of Israel had recently been allowed to return to their homeland, But they were struggling. They were struggling to rebuild Jerusalem. They were struggling to rebuild their faith.

Not only that, but they were weak as a nation. Their national security was extremely insecure. Some of the leaders in charge of rebuilding were corrupt.

Deep down, they knew they needed God's help

We at least can make a pretense. We can (and do) have the veneer of a home decorated and in order. At least for the family gatherings, we can put aside our long-standing arguments and disagreements with cousins and aunts and uncles.

And the impending sense of loss of relationship or the concern about our financial future can be put, for now, on the backburner, as we attend a community or school function.

And that thin veneer exists in our culture to cover a multitude of worries. We say we are not concerned about affairs on anything more than the local level.

But I've heard questions raised by some of you about the increasing gap between rich and poor;

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about whether college is the best route for a young person; about the relentless news cycle that seems as though some of the very basics of governing can't be counted on anymore; about how people in whom we've placed our trust, have disappointed us.

All of this is to say that, to some degree, we are all responsible for the situations in which we find ourselves personally, and as a nation.

Even understanding that, we still ask God to come down and make his home among us. We ask out of desperation. Our request arises from the knowledge that this world can be a beautiful place with him in it, a place with no more sorrow, no more suffering, no more pain. We ask because we believe that God is gracious, loving, and forgiving.

And how do we know that our heavenly Father is like this? Because He has torn the heavens, and has come down, through the person of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Twice in his Gospel, Mark uses Isaiah's image of God tearing open the heavens. The first is when Jesus was baptized, and the heavens were opened. The second is when Jesus is crucified, and the temple curtain was torn in two. Both represent a removal of the wall that separates heaven from earth, and the possibility of a personal, intimate relationship with God for all his children.

We ask for God to come home. Because of Jesus, and the forgiveness we receive through his death on the cross, we can even look forward to his coming. Through our relationship with God through Jesus, and through the power of the Holy Spirit within us, we can be part of the solution, instead of the problem. We can receive the light of Christ, and carry it with us, dispelling the darkness, instead of adding to it.

And maybe the most faithful prayer you can pray on this first Sunday after Christmas is to start at the very beginning. "God I don't even know what to pray for. Lord, come down." When we are ready to pray like that, then we are really ready for Jesus. And when Jesus comes it will be a glorious surprise to discover what sort of place and what sort of heart he can make into a home.