

I have a question for you. Why are you here tonight? Did you come “home for Christmas?” If so, I welcome you with all my heart, as this is your home. Have you been here all along, all year? If so, I welcome you, too, to your home in Christ.

But why did you come here tonight to hear? Ah, I know, you want to hear about the baby, Jesus, born this night so long ago.

I am SURE you can picture the scene: the baby, with a warm God-glow about him. And the manger in which he lay, with pristine straw to soften his tiny body. I am sure you can see the beautiful cloth, in which Jesus is so lovingly wrapped. And his serene and beatific parents, Mary and Joseph, looking lovingly at the child. Maybe you see a warm—but lesser—glow about their heads, as well.

Can you picture this scene with me? Of course, there are animals all around the child—and shepherds bowing and angels singing—all adoring, as we are tonight. This surely is one of the greatest scenes in all of human history: God born among us, to right our world, to right his creation.



I don’t know where you see yourself in this nativity scene, but surely you do? Perhaps you are one of the shepherds, come home to worship the Holy Child? (And we have!) Perhaps you have a more distant perspective. But wherever you place yourself in the picture, this scene is so familiar, so inviting, that we can easily forget that the Holy Family was far from their home.

THEY definitely were NOT “home for Christmas.” Luke tells us where the child was born, and why: Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, because Joseph was a descendant of King David, the great Jewish king.

Notice how deftly Luke reminds us that the Messiah, our Savior, was foretold to be a descendant of David. Luke explains how a lowly family from the backwater of Galilee came to be in King David’s city for the birth of the child: a census, he says, to justify more taxes. We know about census and we know about taxes, so we are half-convinced. Luke even names names: Emperor Augustus’ census, Quirinius’ governorship. Our historians can’t quite make these names and their dates, and the places all fit, but we trust, we believe, even as we also realize that Luke was making a theological point, a Messianic point.

The beautiful baby with the God-glow IS **God-born-among-us**, as predicted. So a Nazarene could not have been born at home that first Christmas.

Surely, though, wherever Jesus is, THERE is our home? Wherever Jesus is, don't we focus on the



Holy Child? Do we even notice that the animals, well, they might not be quite as clean as we envision them? Where the Holy Child is, do we even notice that the cloth wrapping him in SWADDLING, not exactly

new? Where the Holy Child is, do we care if the ones to come to adore Jesus are lowly shepherds, not royalty.

Knowing Church of the Resurrection as I do, I predict you will think that the reality of Jesus' nativity scene was blessed, as well as prophetic. Doesn't the messiness of the real manger allow US **each** to come close to the Holy Child? The messiness all about the Holy Child lets us know that Jesus isn't reserved just for those who have money, or a home, or jobs, or perfect children, or the glow of youth, or happy families—any of these things.

I never would have envisioned the Holy coming among us in this way. But, seeing what actually happened, I can't envision a more perfect way for God to come among us to proclaim that he is WITH us, whatever befalls us in this life.

Luke doesn't tell us about the baby's journey home, either via Egypt or any other route. Luke next jumps right to Jesus' presentation in the Temple in Jerusalem, from whence the Holy Family finally got to return home to carry out their "ordinary" lives. But, by carrying with them the baby Jesus, didn't they carry their home with them? By carrying with them the child Jesus, didn't they carry home new hope? New hope for a better tomorrow, and our only hope for a better eternal tomorrow?

So I ask you tonight: Is this place, these bricks and this leaky roof, home for you? I hope so, to the extent that Jesus lives here.

I ask you tonight: Is this place, this svelte body, this flesh and this blood, home for you? I hope so, to the extent that Jesus lives here.

I ask you tonight: Isn't our home, in Christ Jesus, portable? Won't we take Jesus with us, wherever we go, this night and in all the nights to come?