

Oregon City United Methodist Church
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Series: A Light in the Darkness
Sermon: Home for Christmas

Isaiah 7:13-14

Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

John 1:4-5

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Sermon

Homily 1:

Home. A place to find Hope. In December 1903, after many attempts, the Wright brothers were successful in getting their "flying machine" off the ground. Thrilled, they telegraphed this message to their sister Katherine: "We have actually flown 120 feet. Will be home for Christmas." Katherine hurried to the editor of the local newspaper and showed him the message. He glanced at it and said, "How nice. The boys will be home for Christmas." He totally missed the big news--man had flown. Sometimes we miss the hope! Don't miss the news this Christmas. Isaiah was written hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, and he called out that God was going to redeem the nation of Israel. From a baby. And you will call him Immanuel. God with Us.

Hope. Webster's definition represents the world's definition of hope. Two of Webster's definitions describe hope as the world sees it. The definition states that hope is "a feeling that what is wanted will happen; desire accompanied by expectation."

If a girl says "I hope my boyfriend gives me a diamond ring for Christmas." Does the feeling bring about the hope? Probably not. If a guy says "I hope my football team has a good year." Does the feeling guarantee a good football team? Not here in Oregon. If an adult says "I hope my grandfather will get over his cancer." Does the desire guarantee the recovery? Unfortunately, no. If a person says "I hope I get this job." Does the desire guarantee the job? Nothing is guaranteed - except God's promises. In that, we can put our hope. You heard Webster's definition, here's the Bible's definition of hope: (paraphrased): "Hope is an expectation based on the promises of God." God's hope is not based on feelings, desire or positive thoughts. It is based on a promise from God. Someone has said "You can't break God's promises by leaning on them!" There is an old gospel song that states this principle well: "Standing On The Promises." Part of that song states "standing on the promises that cannot fail, though the howling storms of doubt and fear assail."

-God's hope is enduring.

-God's hope cannot be frustrated.

-God's hope will never end.

-God's hope is eternal.

And in a baby born in Bethlehem, we get a promise fulfilled, spoken 700 years before through the prophet Isaiah, who told us to be patient! In Christmas, we understand that God keeps God's promises. Home, a place to find Hope.

Homily 2:

Home - A place where you can be at Peace. A young woman was nervous about meeting her boyfriend's parents for the first time; she wanted to look her absolute best. As she glanced at herself in the mirror, she noticed her black shoes looked a little dingy, so she gave them a fast swipe with the paper towel she had used to blot her breakfast bacon. A little grease shined them right up. When she arrived at their home she was greeted by the parents, boyfriend and their spoiled, cranky poodle. The dog got a whiff of the bacon grease on her shoes and followed her around all evening. At the end of the evening, as she was getting ready to leave, her boyfriend's parents said, "Cleo really likes you, dear, and she is an excellent judge of character. We are delighted to welcome you into our little family."

Home is a place where imperfection is made perfect. When you're at home, you can be yourself. When you're at home, you don't have to pretend. But maybe your heart isn't at peace. Can I tell you something? A heart at peace finds forgiveness. And gives forgiveness. We don't live in a perfect world. And to try to be perfect is to reach for insanity. To expect others to be perfect is ludicrous. Find and give forgiveness this Christmas season. To be accepted JUST AS I AM.

Home – A place where FAILURE finds FORGIVENESS.

Think about it like this: If our greatest need had been INFORMATION, God would have sent an EDUCATOR. If our greatest need had been TECHNOLOGY, God would have sent a SCIENTIST.

If our greatest need had been MONEY, God would have sent an ECONOMIST.

If our greatest need had been PLEASURE, God would have sent an ENTERTAINER.

But our greatest need was FORGIVENESS, so God sent us a SAVIOR!

Home – A place where you can be at PEACE.

Homily 3:

Home is for joy. Its supposed to be, anyway. Some of you are happy at home, and you dread to go to work. Some of you are happy at work, and dread to go home. God bless you if you're happy at both. God help you if you dread each place. Home is supposed to be a sanctuary from the troubles of the outside world. Maybe Christmas is a time to work on some joy at home! Maybe a good Christmas movie can bring a little joy into the house. One of our favorite Christmas movies that we watch every year is Christmas Vacation. We were in Seaside a few weeks ago, they have a new movie theater on the main boardwalk - and they were showing Christmas Vacation. The next time you see it, think about these fun facts:

1) Christmas Vacation is based on a John Hughes short story. He called it "Christmas '59", published in National Lampoons in 1980. The movie gives a small nod to Hughes's original story when Clark pulls out reels of old family Christmas films to reveal that one is titled "X-Mas '59", even though the home movie was in 1955.

2) Christmas Vacation was directed by Jeremiah Chechik, who never saw a Vacation Movie before, nor had ever directed any movie before. He did OK. He actually makes an appearance on a People's magazine cover.

3) There were no rehearsals for the actors on Christmas Vacation. Chase's tendency to ad-lib and improvise made such preparation useless.

4) When Clark is watching the old movies, you see the house he grew up in. It's also the house from the old tv show Bewitched. And the neighbor's house with the yuppie couple is the same house as used in Lethal Weapon.

5) Like most Christmas movies, there is some homage paid to It's a Wonderful Life, directed by Frank Capra. Rusty watches a little of the show in the movie. Christmas vacation's assistant director? Frank Capra III.

6) This was Mae Questal's last film. She played Aunt Bethany. Her first role? Betty Boop. Like, the original Betty Boop. Did the voice too. She's that old. She also provided the voice for Olive Oyle in the original

popeyes.

7) The production originally had a trained squirrel for the scene where it wreaks havoc on the house. Unfortunately, it died the day before the scene was shot. An untrained random squirrel was used in the final film.

8) Gene Autry's "Here Comes Santa Claus" plays during the final police raid. Actor Randy Quaid, who plays Uncle Eddie, is Gene Autry's cousin.

A theme that runs through many a Christmas film is joyless people find joy. Sad folk find happiness. George Bailey found joy in Zuu Zuu's petals, being alive again. Virginia found out there is a Santa Clause! Buddy the elf found his family. Eight year old Kevin lost his family and found them again. Charlie Brown's tree was good enough. Even the grinch's heart grew three sizes that day. Don't let Christmas escape this year without you finding a little Christmas cheer along the way. Home - a place to find Joy.

Homily 3:

Home - A Place to Find Love.

I got this story out of Woman's Day Magazine. Don't ask how I got this out of Woman's Day Magazine - you read a lot of stuff when you're a pastor. Karen was expecting another child and so she worked to prepare little three year old Michael for the birth of his baby sister. Every night Michael saying to his sister in his mother's tummy. During the delivery of the baby serious complications developed. After many hours of struggle, Michael's little sister was born. But she was in very serious condition. She was rushed to a neonatal intensive care unit in another hospital in Knoxville, Tennessee. Instead of getting better, the little girl continued to decline. The pediatric specialist told Karen and her husband, "There is very little hope. Be prepared for the worst." The parents contacted a local cemetery about a burial plot. Meanwhile Michael continued to beg his parents to let him see his sister. "I want to sing to her," he said. But kids were never allowed in intensive care.

The second week of his sister's intensive care stay, Michael's sister looked like she wouldn't make it through the week. So Karen made up her mind that she would take Michael to see his sister whether and the hospital liked it or not. If Michael didn't see her right away, he might never get to see her in all.

Karen dressed him in over sized scrub suit and marched him into ICU. The head nurse demanded that they leave. The mother instinct rose up strong in Karen and she looked at the head nurse with steel-eyed determination: "He's not leaving until he sees his sister!" Karen took Michael to his sister's bedside. After a few moments of looking at his sister all connected to tunes, three year old Michael began to sing.

"You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are gray. You'll never know dear how much I love you. Please don't take my sunshine away."

Instantly the baby seemed to respond. Her pulse slowed and became steady. "Sing it again, Michael!" said Karen.

"You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are gray. You'll never know dear how much I love you. Please don't take my sunshine away."

The strained breathing of his sister became a smooth as a kitten's purr. The head nurse now stood transfixed with tears in her eyes. Michael sang that chorus again and again. And the next day - the very next day - Michael's little sister was well enough to go home. Women's Day Magazine called it "The miracle of the Brothers Song". The medical staff just called in a miracle. Karen called it a miracle of God's love.

Jesus came as God's love song to you. Christmas is GOD saying, "You matter to me". Jesus came to tell us that we are God's sunshine. We sing Christmas songs to remember that we matter to God, that even though we are as good as dead without God, we find life thru him. In him was life, and that life was the light of all humankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Home - a place to find Love. And the family of God said, AMEN.

Homily 5: