

Meditation
Proclaiming the Good News: We're Finally Home

Let us Pray: Let the words of my mouth and Meditations of our hearts be acceptable, O Lord, Our Rock and Our Redeemer, amen.

A couple of weeks before Christmas, an elderly man in Phoenix telephoned his adult son in New York. He said, "Son, your mother and I have been married for 40 years, and I just wanted to call and tell you that we've decided to get a divorce."

His son was aghast. He said, "Dad, that's terrible! Don't you and Mother do a thing until I've had a chance to come and talk to you. I'll be on the next plane to Phoenix!"

They hung up, and the son called his sister in Chicago. He said, "Sis, Dad just called. He told me that he and Mom are getting a divorce."

His sister said, "Like heck they are! I'll meet you in Phoenix, and we'll talk some sense into them."

She hung up and immediately telephoned her father. She said, "Dad, my brother just called me and told me that, after 40 years of marriage, you and Mom have decided to get a divorce. Don't you do a thing until I've had a chance to talk with you. I'll be on the next plane to Phoenix."

Her father hung up, turned to his wife, and said, "Honey, both kids are going to be home for Christmas, and they're paying their own way!"

Home for Christmas. A recent survey found that Christmas is the one time of year when most people want to be at home. It leads Thanksgiving by two to one, birthdays by three to one and the Fourth of July by almost five to one.

Christmas – it's a time when we celebrate God making a home with us. I suppose it stands to reason that it is thus a time when many of us also feel God's call for us to search for and find what may be home for us.

Beverly Elliott lived in Houston. She had not seen her son, Russell Love, for four years, and had not heard from him in two years, but she knew he was homeless somewhere in Los Angeles County. She talked to the FBI and the LA Police Department, but they told her they couldn't help.

Longing to get in touch with her son, Mrs. Elliott ran a personals ad in the *Times* for twelve days in October. It said: RUSSELL LOVE, from Houston for anyone knowing where he lives. please call his mother at 713-447-5968. Russell, your mother will never forget you. She loves you!" Maybe someone would see the ad, she thought, and get in touch with her.

Someone did.

A man named Ralph Campbell, who had spent 25 years living on the street, had given some extra sandwiches to a friend. The friend had turned to another friend and said, simply, “Russ, do you want a sandwich?” So Campbell phoned the newspaper. He led a reporter to some shipping containers in a parking lot on Western Avenue. There were some bedrolls there. This was where the guy he knew as “Russ” was sleeping.

He wasn’t there. But the next morning, the reporter returned. A young, blond headed man was asleep, rolled up in a bright yellow blanket. When he finally awoke, he sat up. The reporter asked if he was Russell Love. He said he was. “Your mother wants you to call her,” said the reporter. He gave Russell the ad. Russell rolled up his bedroll and walked off down Western Avenue, the paper with the ad under his arm.

Russell called home on a Friday. His mother told him how much she had missed him. They talked three times between Friday and Monday. She said she would send him some money. When she got paid at the end of the month, she would send him some tickets to fly home for Christmas. The money arrived. Russell had to call home to get some ID papers to cash the check.

“I’m going to see that he gets all the ID necessary to get a job,” said his mother. “I’m going to try to make it possible for him to rethink his decision and to come back into the world he came from and to make a better decision.”

Christmas. It’s about being contacted from our eternal home and knowing how much we are loved by one who values us more than we ever imagined.

Indeed, at Christmas, God reaches out to us and says, “I love you, and just want you to know that you have a home with me.” Now it’s up to us to respond, to say, “I’m glad God has got in touch with me, and I do want to go home.”

Russell Love went home. A *Times* article on December 1 showed a picture of him and his mother together. It told about all the catching-up the family had done since his return and about the way they “grabbed each other and hugged and hugged” when he showed up. “It feels great to be home,” the article quoted Love as saying. “It’s nice to be a family again after being a traveler.”
Pause

“It’s nice to be a family again after being a traveler.” Indeed.

We are all travelers in this life on earth which means that we are never completely at home in this world. There is a deep longing, a yearning in the human heart for something more, for something beyond, for a life we can suspect but can’t quite touch. It lures us, draws us, teases and torments us, until at last we give up the ghost and embrace it fully.

But at Christmas – at Christmas we come as close to touching it on this side of the grave as is possible. The Christmas story is, in fact, the story of God’s having contacted us from beyond – of our having *heard* from home. This is what the excitement *was* all about – is *still* all about. In the baby born in Bethlehem, God has gotten in touch with us, has assured us of the life beyond – has said, “Here is my gift of love. You have a home with me.”

Jesus himself would say it later: “In my Father’s house there are many rooms...I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there you may be also.”

At Christmas, we have the opportunity to feel at home – even though we may actually *be* homeless. For it is at Christmas that we are reminded that we have a forever-home with God in Christ.

This is why Christmas is such a wonderful time of the year to re-think our lives and redirect them toward our eternal home. Feeling the assurance of God’s presence with us, and the sense of what Christmas is all about, we are encouraged to make a new start toward the values we have always believed in, toward being the persons we were created to be. Our sense of forgiveness and acceptance is strong at Christmastime.

Even Ebenezer Scrooge could be forgiven for his cold, inhuman ways, and could totally reorient his life toward warmth and caring and living.

We know we can too. All we have to do is accept the invitation to come home – home to God – to surrender our hearts and lives to the almighty with fresh commitment. I invite you to do just that tonight. Listen now to the words of “O Holy Night.” It reminds us that indeed, Christ’s coming allows the soul to know its worth. Receive now *that* coming and you will indeed find your *eternal* home. Amen.