



Series: Home for Christmas

Message: They Belong

Pastor Chad E. Billington

December 8, 2019

Smythe Street Church

Pre-Sermon

Communion (Verner) & Christmas in the City Offering (Wayne)

Please Stand and Read the Gospel Passage

Luke 2:8–20 (NIV)

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” ¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Merry Christmas!

Before I go to far, I have to say that last week our kids did a great job with their presentation with a lot of fun, and reflection on the Christmas story & Joy.

The week before, Jingle Jam, we started a series for the month of December, and our teaching is centring around our theme, “Home for Christmas” and we are talking about the importance of belonging.

Belonging is such a central part to our understanding of Christmas and the holidays in our part of the world. For good and for bad.

For many people, Christmas evokes images of families around a tree, or seated around a table. With whatever imperfections and challenges are faced, Christmas is a time for many when we gather together with those we love and by whom we are loved. Those memories and traditions are cherished

For others, Christmas is painful, in many ways because the aspirations for belonging and togetherness are not fulfilled. In some homes there was no joy around the tree, and fear at the table, or where life’s circumstance have robbed those we love dear and left us with a sense of loss.

Regardless of what side of the coin you have been on. The Christmas season heightens the awareness for all of us that we long for home and a place to belong.

Last Week, Jeremy started us on December 1 looking at the story of Levi

Levi was a man that people would walk by, but Jesus did not walk by, Jesus called this man that others would not accept and gave him a place among his disciples.

Jeremy looked at Levi (aka Matthew) and helped us to see,

“YOU BELONG BECAUSE JESUS IS CALLING”

Jesus has a place for you. You have a place of belonging, that is founded first not in what you have done, but in his purpose and love for you. (you can find the message on our podcast online).

Jesus at the Table...

As I was reflecting upon this week’s message, in our series, I was drawn to consider how often meals were part of Jesus’ story in the gospels and in his teaching.

Actually, the image of Jesus at the table inspired to bring my dining room table here to use it as a visual, unfortunately, the snow kind of complicated my plans to get a trailer and bring it in for you.

After Jesus calls Levi/Matthew, in the passage that Jeremy reference last week, Jesus goes to his house for a meal.

In Luke 7, Jesus goes to the home of a Pharisee and is eating with a group of religious leaders.

Tables and feasts appear in Jesus' stories too. In Luke 15, the famous parable of the prodigal son, the story ends with the Father throwing a banquet for his son who returns home.

In Each of Jesus' Meals there is Tension

When Jesus went to eat with Levi, the religious leaders were not very happy that he was eating with 'tax collectors and sinners.'

In Luke 7, at the meal with the religious leaders. It is a pretty posh event, when a woman who was known to live 'a sinful life' or 'that kind of woman' shows up and breaks a jar of perfume on Jesus feet and washes his feet with her tears. And the whispers start, 'what is she doing here?'

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father is not just welcoming home a long lost traveller, he is throwing a party for a son who squandered his inheritance and insulted the family. So when the older brother comes back from the field he has to ask, 'why would you throw a party for him?'

Over and over again, Jesus tell stories and sits at tables where people question, 'What are they doing here?' The sinner, the poor, the outsider.

THE OUTSIDERS, 'THEY' BELONG AT JESUS' TABLE.

This takes me back to the passage about the shepherds...

Luke 2:8–9b (NIV)

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them...

From His very beginning, Jesus had a way of bringing those who were on the outside, on the periphery into connection and life with others.

When Jesus came, God sent angels to find those who were on the outskirts, those who could have been overlooked, and sent them angels. Angels are messengers, telling them they are welcome.

God Wants His table full

Jesus spoke harsh words to those who thought the table was full, the table was for people like them, the table didn't need 'someone else' to upset the family dinner.

In Luke 14, Jesus tells a story comparing God's kingdom to a great banquet being prepared by a man with many invited guests. When the invited guests would not come, the man with the banquet vanquished those guests, but then commanded his servants.

Luke 14:21–23 (NIV)

²¹ "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' ²² " 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' ²³ "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.'

AS A CHURCH A GREAT DANGER IS FOR US TO BECOME CONTENT WITH WHO WE ARE WITH AND FORGET THAT GOD IS NOT HAPPY, UNTIL HIS TABLE IS FULL.

In addition to talking about God's dealing with those who refuse his invitation, it also tells us that God is not satisfied until his table is full.

I LIKE MY TABLE FULL.

This is the heart of the Gospel. Is this not why Jesus says he came:

Luke 19:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

As the people who follow Jesus, we miss the boat if we are not thinking beyond ourselves to ask, who is God asking me to invite into his rule, his kingdom, is new way of life both for here and eternity.

Why We Do What We Do.

This is why we have 4 Candlelight Services this year.

- Not to fill time.
- Not because people need activities.
- Honestly, the truth is I have nothing better to do with my time than to make room for someone to come and experience God's grace in desperate need this Christmas.

Invitation Tips:

- Type www.ssc.church/christmas to someone and text it to them, you get a nice preview, a link to the service times and it has a map for directions.
- Handouts

Why we do Alpha

- Alpha starting on Wednesday, January 15th

- Alpha is a setting where we literally invite people to a table to eat in a group, to make connections, to ask questions about faith, and we trust that they can encounter Jesus.
- We have hundreds of people who have taken Alpha over the years, and many of you have come to faith through it.
 - If you are here today and you are trying to feel your way around what the story of Jesus means, we invite you to join us for Alpha in the new year.
- Two things I would like to say to our church about alpha:
 - Part of our push for Candlelight is because we want to invite everyone who comes to Alpha.
 - Need some more people to bake cookies to go with alpha invites
 - You can serve in Alpha
 - Who can you invite to Alpha

Closing Question: What matters in 10 years?

- Gift lists?
 - Without a picture, I can't remember what I got last year, let alone what I got for my kids 2 years ago.
- Activities?

We do a lot of things that are good, and fun, but really when we look back, may not have lasting value.

- Did I have peas and carrots, or stuffing and beans...

Something that will have value, is sharing Jesus with someone.