

Christmas Message Series: Journey to Bethlehem

Theme verse: "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east, and we have come to worship Him." -Matthew 2:2

Sermon #1: "Leaving Home for Christmas"

Scripture: Luke 2:1-7

Blurb: Christmas is not about *going* home. It's about *leaving* home. God left "home" (heaven) in Jesus and came to earth. Joseph and Mary left their home in Nazareth and traveled to Bethlehem. The Shepherds and magi left their homes to go worship Jesus. This Sunday we'll wrestle Christmas away from nostalgic sentimentalism and instead embrace God's calling in Christmas to go out!

**Opening Song:** Hymn Sing

**Welcome:** -Pastor David

Good morning, and welcome to Forest Hills Church, where we Love God and others, Grow in our relationship with Jesus, and Serve others powered and led by the Holy Spirit!

My name is David Werner, and I'm the pastor here.

A special welcome to those here for the first time!

We hope you experience God's love and the care of His family here at Forest Hills.

Please stop by the welcome center and get a mug as our gift to you.

We hope your cup runs over with praise and blessings!

We invite kids to stay in worship, as our whole service is intended for all ages.

There is the nursery available, as well as kids' activity bags, and craft table.

I also want to ask you to join one of our new small groups starting in January.

-New adventure, following HCI

-All groups will be doing the same thing, following the Sunday messages.

-Way to grow spiritually.

-One of our 3 HCI "legs" of our Jubilee year: Worship, Fellowship, and Nurture.

-Meet weekly for six weeks. Lots of options - see sign ups!

-We ask everyone to join in one of these groups so you get to build relationships with new people.

-That's important. After all, consider Madam Winifred and Lady Montague...

**Small Group Video**

-Sign up sheets are out in the lobby. Sign up for one today! Lots of options!

**Memory Verse**

Our take-away verse today takes us right into the Christmas story. It's the question that frames our Christmas celebration for the next three weeks. It's the question of the Magi. It's our question, too! Let's try it together:

**Memory Verse:** -Pastor David

"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east, and we have come to worship Him." -Matthew 2:2

**Worship Set:** - Sanctify

*Angels We Have Heard on High  
Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus  
O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

**Packing, Part 1: Comfort (Froggie/Baby Blanket)** -David

- We need to pack for our special journey.
- I need a helper. [Choose a kid to come up and help.]
- Pretend to pack to go to hospital, mommy is going to have a baby!
- Suitcase. Pack all we need.
- Walk very long way through the hospital, must pack light!
- So, first, we want to pack our most favorite - important!
- Pretend this giant frog is our favorite.
- Brings us comfort!
- We hang on to it!
- We want it!
- But won't fit!
- Have to leave it home.
- Sometimes have to leave what we like best, what makes us feel comfortable, behind
- We want to go meet the new baby in the hospital.
- Perhaps instead we can take along a baby blanket.
- Make us ready for the baby
- And perhaps we can hold the new baby instead!
- Wouldn't that be so much better?
- OK, let's pack the blanket and leave froggie behind.
- We're done with our first part of packing.
- Thank you for helping. You can go sit back with mom!

**Prayers** - Andrew**Advent Candle 3** -Andrew

Remember. Rejoice. Renew.

**Serve Moment:** M&M Ask**Offering:** *Where Is the One?* -Sanctify**Packing, Part 2: Fun (Nintendo/Diapers)** -David

- Need to do some more packing.
- Volunteer: [Choose boy?]
- Getting ready to go to hospital where mommy is having a baby!
- Exciting! But we may have to wait for a LONG TIME!
- Take along favorite game system
- But we have to get everything in the suitcase
- Have to carry it a very long way, so need to get everything in there. Heavy!
- Have to be choosy - only pack what we really need

- Most importantly, we want to be sure to be ready for the baby!
- Think: rather than fun, what is important?
- What do babies need that you could take?
- Diapers!! Very important!!
- Choice: rather than what is most fun for us, choose most important!
- Maybe we can agree to make our fun there: TV, games in lobby, walks with dad.
- Let's chose to leave what is most fun for us home, and make it about the baby!
- We're done with our first part of packing.
- Thank you for helping. You can go sit back with mom!

## Bumper Video

**Message:** "Leaving Home for Christmas"

**PP#1:** I'll be home for Christmas  
 You can plan on me  
 Please have snow and mistletoe  
 And presents on the tree  
 Christmas Eve will find me  
 Where the lovelight gleams  
 I'll be home for Christmas  
 If only in my dreams

(Singing):

I'll be home for Christmas  
 You can plan on me  
 Please have snow and mistletoe  
 And presents on the tree  
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 Where the lovelight gleams  
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**PP#2:** *Image of Bing Crosby's Album cover with him in Christmas hat.*

Well done! I bet most of you didn't need the words, right? This is a Bing Crosby Christmas classic, first sung during WWII. It was to help express the mood of the troops stuck overseas.

But since then it has become a Christmas standard, heard in every story and Christmas party across the country this time of year. It captures a key sentiment about Christmas.

**PP#3:** *Image of warm, perfect, decorated-for-Christmas home*

It's that hope, that yearning for the holiday time to be home with family, where everything seems right, at least for a brief time. We all want that perfect Christmas, and that includes the snow, decorations, a happy Christmas tree, traditional foods and desserts, and all our

loved ones gathered together. Ah, what a beautiful image! We all want to be home for Christmas.

The problem, however, is that Christmas is NOT about being home!

What? Not about home? Family? Can he say that? I mean, hasn't he seen the Christmas movies - *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> St.*, *Home Alone*? You gotta be home for Christmas! Well, I guess we all know that Christmas is not about the eggnog. It's about Jesus...His birth. But it's okay to celebrate with eggnog, right?

**PP#4:** Leaving Home for Christmas

"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east, and we have come to worship Him." -Matthew 2:2

Leaving Home for Christmas

Matthew 2:2, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east, and we have come to worship Him."

**PP#5:** *An image of a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary looking christmasy, such as our 50<sup>th</sup> ornament*

Last week we celebrated our church's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. And we heard the shofar sound and announce the beginning of our church's Jubilee year. We begin a year of pausing what we normally do, the busyness that usually keeps us going, and we are committing to a season of resting with Jesus, sitting with Him, reawakening our spiritual passion, falling in love with Him again in a new way.

It is no coincidence that we officially start during Christmas. We want God to show up among us in a new way! We want God to do a new thing, begin a new future, take us on a grand adventure into the next 50 years!

And the Christmas story grounds our church's story. God choosing average, ordinary people, sending them His Spirit, they are changed...transformed...and Jesus is given to release a blessing that spread out to others.

**PP#6:** *Image of the angel appearing to Mary*

Last week, we heard that like Mary, we as a church are favored and blessed. But we, also like Mary, need to be open to God's invasion into our lives and to use us to create new life...a new future...and to accept God's plan...to choose to do things God's way.

Mary had to give up the plans she had made for her life. Joseph did, too. God changed everything! But when Mary and Joseph let go of their plans and embraced Gods, God changed everything, and it was a bigger and more amazing blessing to them and to everyone else then they could ever have imagined.

But things got crazy for Mary and Joseph. And the Christmas story opens with them leaving home for Christmas. Did you catch that? The first Christmas was about people leaving their homes to follow God's plans. Think about that...let that sink in, as you hear the familiar story again.

**PP#7:** Luke 2 (The Christmas Story)

1 In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. 2 This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria.

3 Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. 4 Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. 5 He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant.

“In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant.”

Isn't that amazing? It was when they left home that Christmas happened! But it was fulfilling a bigger plan that God had going on. Jesus was a King, and so was to be born in King David's town, as a fulfillment of prophesy and a proof that Jesus was the promised Savior.

**PP#8:** Luke 2 (The Christmas Story)

6 While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. 7 She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.

Verse 6...

“While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.”

**PP#9:** Leaving Home for Christmas

So, think about it again. That first Christmas, Jesus left heaven, glory, His eternal home, and came to earth. God was not home for Christmas! In fact, Christmas is about God *leaving* home! That's the point! God has a plan of salvation for the world, and to bring it, Jesus had to leave home for Christmas! Mary and Joseph had to leave home. The shepherds left their fields to come and find Jesus. Christmas called the Magi to leave their homes and travel to a foreign place. They had to go ask around, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east, and we have come to worship Him.” (Matthew 2:2)

Christmas disrupts home! It calls people away from their homes and into God's plan. When we turn Christmas into being about home, and being with family, and wonderful traditions, and sentimental memories, and decorating our homes where festive happiness can occur, we threaten to deflate Christmas of it's main message, to ground Christmas to what we want, rather than what God has planned.

Christmas is radical...it's crazy...it's about leaving what we want and enjoy so that we can embrace a bold and new future!

God wants Christmas to be this for you! So, church, I warn you, don't go home for Christmas! Now, you can go home, physically, and have the important festivities to mark and celebrate Jesus' birth. But to truly celebrate Christmas, make a point to not make Christmas all about family, about friends, about parties, about sentimental feelings. Let Christmas break out in your life. Say “Yes!” to God's crazy plan for your life. Open your life to a different future!

For you, that means saying “Yes” like Mary and Joseph. Here’s an idea. Try making your New Year’s resolutions not on New Year’s Eve, but on Christmas Eve! If God is breaking into the world around you, then what does that mean for your year ahead? What do you need to do differently? What do you need to leave behind?

**PP#10: Leaving Home for Christmas**

1. Leave behind comfort in order to have capacity

When you want to greet a new baby in the hospital, you have to *go there!* You have to get ready, prepare. You have to leave behind some of what comforts you, some of what you want to hold on to, cling to, fill our hands and lives with. What does Christmas call you to leave at home, to leave in 2017? What comforts do you need to leave behind in order to have capacity to receive and hold the new life God is trying to give to you?

**PP#11: Leaving Home for Christmas**

1. Leave behind comfort in order to have capacity
2. Leave behind fun in order to have important

What entertainments, what pass times, what fun activities—that you fill your day with, your down time with, what you do simply because you enjoy it. Now, I’m not saying that you can’t do what God made you to enjoy. I’m saying, how do you fill your days with time-consuming entertainments, stalling diversions, avoidance fun, that keeps you from doing what God is boldly calling you to go do? Candy Crush, Facebook, meems, gifs, they are not bad, but I dare say that Satan knows how to use them to keep us overly preoccupied, to keep us tame and impotent. Christmas calls us away from home, away from our comforts, away from our preferences, away from what we want to fill our lives with selfishly, and calls us on a road trip, to go out there, into the exciting and bold future that God has planned.

The Christmas story grounds our personal stories, each of us, you and me. We are called to leave home to embrace the new life God is bringing.

The Christmas story grounds our church’s story, too. This Jubilee year is about us leaving behind what we want, what we like, what we prefer, what we selfishly want our church to be. We are called to leave that at home. Our Christmas Jesus calls us out into a new place, a new future, leaving behind the way church has been, and embracing what church could be. That means if you’re in town on Sunday, you’re in worship. That means you commit to eating with your church family Wednesday evenings and building relationships. That means in January you join a new small group as a new way of falling more in love with Jesus. It may mean to pause some things about church that you just plain enjoy or prefer.

Christmas is epic! And it calls us away from home!

**PP#12: Leaving Home for Christmas**

1. Leave behind comfort in order to have capacity
2. Leave behind fun in order to have important
3. Leave behind preferences in order to have purpose

Well, let’s go finish our packing! I need a volunteer....Airmari, could you please come up? Remember, we’re getting ready to go to hospital where mommy is having a baby!

**Packing, Part 3** -David

- May need to spend couple of nights away
- How do you make self look so beautiful?
- All these accessories!
- But we only have this suitcase!
- We only have room for some of this.
- How can we choose what between what we WANT to take, and SHOULD
- Remember, our purpose is not to look amazingly beautiful in every way
- Purpose is to have the experience of receiving the new baby!
- How can our purpose help us leave some stuff back?
- Let's pack what helps our purpose, and leave the rest home!

**Closing Song:** *Go, Tell It on the Mountain* - Sanctify

**Announcements:** Wed. M&M: Meal - Rebecca Circle  
More - Christmas Carol Win, Lose, or Draw!  
Next Sunday: Christmas Eve: Services 10, 4:30, 11:30 p.m.

**Memory Verse:** -Pastor David

"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east, and we have come to worship Him." -Matthew 2:2

**Benediction:** -David