

### Joyful Homes

*“There’s no place like home for the holidays.”* It is good to be home with family at Christmas time. It’s great to see the smiling faces and eat all the good food that Christmas seems to bring. There’s a fire in the fireplace. Everyone is sitting around on the couch, or chairs or on the floor opening gifts. The Christmas music is playing in the background. The aroma of hot chocolate, cookies, ham cooking in the oven fills the room. It’s good to be home, isn’t it? It is good to have a joyful home, isn’t it?

Yet, what happens on December 26<sup>th</sup>? We go back to our routines. The paper that covered the gifts is bagged up for the garbage. The gifts put away. It won’t be long and the tree and decorations will come down and placed into their storage places. The dishes are washed and put away. We get ready for life in 2016.

Have you ever wondered what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph on the day after his birth? The night of his birth was an amazing night. The Son of God came to live in this world. The hillside was lit up by hosts of angels. The shepherds had run to see the King of Kings who had now come to earth. Even though Jesus’ first home wasn’t much, it was filled with an incredible amount of Joy.

Even though we don’t know how long Mary and Joseph stayed in Bethlehem, one can’t help but think that they must have stayed in the stable for a couple of days at least. So, on the morning after his birth, the animals were still there. The baby was still lying in their feeding trough. There was no Holiday Inn or Best Western. No room service. Who knows what they ate for breakfast. They still had no idea what laid ahead of them as a young family. Life would continue to go on, at least, for a while just as it had before.

How did Mary and Joseph keep a joyful home? They would have to flee for their lives in a short while because Herod wanted to kill Jesus. It had to be difficult to be on the move. Even after they returned to Nazareth, life would not always be easy. As Mary pondered all that had happened on that first Christmas night, she would realize that true joy did not lie in their physical home, but joy was found in their child.

That baby in their arms had come into the world to give all of us a joyful home. Jesus left his home in heaven to make His home here among us. You see, **“today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you.”** He has come to make his home in you. Someday he will come to take us home, to that heavenly home, that will always be filled with joy. It is that joy that removes fear in our hearts.

The angel would say to the shepherds, **“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”** That means those words are spoken to us as well. Jesus came into this world and did his job. You sins are paid for. He came to forgive our sins and wipe the slate clean. He has brought us to believe and trust that promise. He fills us with a joy that will far at last any joy found in this world.

He wants to see all of us in that perfect joyful home in heaven. God was born a man so that he could win peace for people who could not find it for themselves. This peace didn’t come cheap. It would cost the Son of God his life. What is even more amazing? That child in Mary and Joseph’s arms knew it, and he came anyway. This child would take our sins and carry them to the cross. He would die. But the grave could not hold him. He would come out of that grave on Easter Sunday and announce to the world that the power of Satan was crushed. The battle was fought and won. That is the **“good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”**

Even though our homes here on earth may not be a Norman Rockwell painting, we have a joyful home that awaits us in heaven. No one can take that joyful home away from us through faith in Jesus. Enjoy your home, your family, your friends. But let us all look forward to the perfect joyful home that awaits us in heaven. It is for that reason that we can join with the angels in saying: **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”** Amen.