

Gospel lesson

Today we return to the Gospel of Luke, right after the angels told the shepherds that a Savior was born:



picture from picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/shepherds-angels/>; credit: LUMO

Luke 2:15-20

(NRSV)

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."

¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child;

¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The word of God for the people of God

<Children's time>

<Hymn “Away in a Manger”

UMH #217>

Message: Home



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/come-let-us-adore-him/first-sunday-after-christmas-day-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/first-sunday-after-christmas-day-year-c-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Great provider of our heavenly home,
as we take time now to further consider today’s
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may rejoice in Your presence whenever and
wherever we are, and share Your gift of love with
others. Amen.

We conclude our Christmas series today with “Home”:

““I’ll be home for Christmas...” Sorry, I couldn’t
help myself. Here we are on the Fifth Day of
Christmas and the First Sunday of Christmastide,
and you’re probably either tired of being home or
loving it. Or both.”



picture from MMMS collection

Where were you for Christmas? <Let them respond>

What made it special? <Let them respond>

We have a number of traditions in our house. One of them is that on Christmas morning, everyone who is there waits until everyone else is ready before anyone goes in to open presents. What are some of your Christmas traditions? <Let them respond>

It's fun to hear about the different traditions in the various homes, while many things are the same. What makes a home special? What makes a home feel like "home"? <Let them respond>

What would you say are the marks of a Christian home? <Let them respond>

I was dismayed when I first learned that not all homes feel safe and secure. I understood it a little bit more when my sister told me about one of her daughter's friends who liked to hang out at their house.

The teenager was amazed that despite all the bickering, everyone was loved and accepted. Disagreements did not turn into big fights. My sister's home felt welcoming and safe. I think a big part of why it was that way, is that they know the love of the Lord and share it with one another.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/samuel-born/>;
credit: [Sweet Publishing](#)

Samuel seemed to have a place like that at the temple. His parents loved him and made sure he was well cared-for, and as Eli blessed them for the gift of their son, I am guessing Samuel was a nice kid.

We know very little about Jesus's childhood, but I like to think that Mary and Joseph provided a warm, loving environment in which to grow and thrive.

But you know, it is not just children that need a place of refuge, of safety and of love, to help them thrive. So many people today struggle, whether because of the way they were raised, because of their own poor choices, or because of events over which they have no control.



picture from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Canva - Woman Feeling Emotional Stress.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Canva_-_Woman_Feeling_Emoional_Stress.jpg)

And what typically happens when a person is hurt or stressed beyond their normal capacity to cope?
<Let them respond>

It is natural for people to be more self-centered when they have needs that are not being met, problems not being resolved. Instead of reaching out to help others, they withdraw. They are likely to lash out at anyone whom they feel is adding to their stress.

What kind of world results from everyone being self-centered? <Let them respond>

Why are we so much more patient with children who misbehave than with adults who misbehave, when we know they normally behave well? Why do we demand adults “just deal with it” and not seek to understand what is causing them to act out or withdraw, to help diffuse their stress?

Given how many mistakes people make, we sure could use a lot more “benefit of the doubt” instead of judgmental convictions.

And why do we so often push people away who only seek to help? Have we not learned to move beyond proud independence to caring interdependence yet?



picture from MMMS collection

Jesus taught us the better way. Paul describes it in his letter to the Colossians: living with love and thoughtfulness toward others because Christ’s word dwells within you.

God models the behavior asked of us. Caring and forgiveness enable relationships that are not transactional but rather are based on love that nurtures each person in it, in all situations.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/come-let-us-adore-him/first-sunday-after-christmas-day-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/first-sunday-after-christmas-day-year-c-graphics>

Perhaps we can think of it this way: if we are the body of Christ, and He lives in our hearts, what kind of home are we making for Jesus? Is it safe for Him to abide in us? And what if He invites a friend over? How do we treat those Christ loves, especially those who have no other place to go?

Start with building a home of love in you for yourself, based on the love of God. You know how to develop this: through prayer, Bible study, etc.

Then share this loving home with others, in increasingly wider groups as you can:

- † Your immediate family and close friends
- † Your extended family and church friends
- † Your community and workplace

And so on... As your "home" widens, God's love is more realized on earth and the kingdom of glory draws nearer for all.