

John 1:10-14

“Home Alone for Christmas”
Christmas Day

December 25, 2017

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and God our Heavenly Father. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Introduction]

As we unpack our decorations each year,
we unpack a Rubbermaid tub full of Christmas movies:
“It’s a Wonderful Life,” “Holiday Inn,” “White Christmas,”
“Polar Express,” “Christmas Vacation,”
and “The Santa Clause – the whole trilogy.”
The 1990s added another popular Christmas movie trilogy – “Home Alone.”
Although the movie was fictional and funny,
the reality is that for sad and serious reasons people are left home alone.

Our thoughts go out to them this day.

- We think of the men and women of our armed forces,
representing our country somewhere around the world.
- We remember people in prison,
both those who deserve to be there and those who don’t.
- AND We know that some of you have recently lost a loved one and
may feel dreadfully alone this Christmas,
even if your house is filled with other guests.

Some of the most gripping stories, movies, and news reports at this season focus on people who are alone.

Could one of those stories be about God?
Could God Be Left Alone for Christmas?

[God the Father “Left Alone”]

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (v 14).

The man who set these words to paper, blessed St. John,
is telling you something you may *NEVER* have thought of before.
God our Father himself, in a way, spent that first Christmas alone.

He has a Son, too, who *HAD BEEN* by his side.
That Son was even there in heaven with his Father at the beginning of time.
“The world was made through him,” John says (v 10).

But our Father was willing to let him go
when it came time for the first Christmas at Bethlehem.

He didn't kick him out of heaven as some kind of punishment,
the way he did with the wicked angels who rebelled against him.

John says,

***"The Word [the Christ] became flesh and dwelt among us,
and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father,
full of grace and truth"*** (v 14).

God our Father spent that first Christmas alone, you might say;
not because of anger, and not due to an accident.

He spent that first Christmas alone, because he wanted his Son to be with us,
right down here where you are.

Our world is a sorry place in many ways.

And we haven't done very much to fix it.

To the contrary, we're the ones who since the dawn of time
have dumped so much sorrow into it.

We frequently don't care much about other people or even about God.

We've made quite clear time and time again
that we're going to live our lives our own way,
regardless of the consequences.

In a world where we're so dense
that we brag of our better computers
and our ability to communicate,

And yet it doesn't bother us
that we're frequently
letting go of relationships
– relationships with our own relatives,
our neighbors,
and even letting go of our relationship
with God himself.

Human sin has made a horrible mess of everything.

[***God Sent***]

God knew very well it would take far more than just
another preacher . . . or diplomat . . . or educator . . . to fix it all.

So he sent what we needed. "***The Word became flesh and dwelt among us***" (v 14).

Here, the slumbering infant on the straw of a cow's lunch box,
is not merely cute little baby Jesus,
like some character out of a storybook.

Here, the slumbering infant on straw,
is the eternal God come down to our world to rescue us helpless people
by his living, his dying, and his glorious rising again.
He's as human as human can be,
a real Child who gave his mother real birth-pains.
He grew up and faced the real disappointment of being rejected,
the real pangs when they spiked his body tight to a cross.
He poured out real blood in a real, ugly death.

Yet this slumbering infant of Bethlehem's manger is at the same time the true God,
who has all the authority in heaven and earth to tell you,
"Take heart, son! Cheer up! Your sins are forgiven."

It's exactly as our friend St. John puts it:

**"To all who did receive him, who believed in his name,
he gave the right to become children of God"** (v 12).

You don't have that right on your own.
You're a sinner, just as I am a sinner.
God doesn't owe you a dime!
But he *gives* this right to you, Jesus Christ does, as a sheer gift.
He gives it to you because of who he is and what he has done.

Heaven's Father was willing to be left alone that first Christmas
—if you know what I mean—
so that this Christ, this God-man, could come and take his place here with us.

[Let Us Not Leave Him Alone]

But in the midst of this incredible glad news,

John says something that drops like a rock.

**"He [the Christ] was in the world,
and the world was made through him,
yet the world did not know him.**

***He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him*"** (vv 10–11).

God was left alone that first Christmas in another way, a tragic way.

It seems the Bethlehem people didn't care about his gift to them, his Christ.

They took no notice of him;
made no room for his mother.

The very people he came to rescue
had other things to worry about,
thank you very much.

AND It keeps happening, doesn't it?

We fill our lives with all sorts of warm, wistful scenes . . .

but many are silent instead of praying,
many are considering nothing like worship,
and many ignoring God's incredible gift.

Walk the streets outside this building.

You'll find people who are up to their ears in Christmas trappings.

And maybe, just maybe, it has been that way for too long
in the house that has your address on the door.

***"He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.
But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name,
he gave the right to become children of God"*** (vv 11–12).

You know why he came.

He came to be believed and trusted.
He came for you to lean on.
He came to be the gift of God,
not just for the general public or for some other person out there.
He came FOR YOU.

[Conclusion]

God our Father has spent far too many Christmases left alone, home alone,
—if you know what I mean—

too many Christmases passed over and tossed aside by people.

He can't give you any more than you see lying here on Bethlehem's straw.
It's the best he has to give. And it's all you'll ever really need. Amen.

“Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good that you may do his will,
through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Heb 13:20-21)