

John 1:1-14  
Welcome Home!  
December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016



One December Monday morning I was out walking about 6am. It was dark and the sky was filled with stars, lights shining in the darkness as our scripture says. I was walking and talking with God and I just couldn't shake the thought of 2 words: welcome home. I was thinking about Christmas Eve, and the words Welcome Home kept coming to mind. As I thought of that experience and Christmas day I decided it was a word from God to you: **Welcome Home, welcome to the family of God!**

Every Christmas & Christmas Eve in all the churches I have served we have had many guests. We have had brothers and sisters in the faith and long lost cousins and aunts and uncles in the faith gather in a great family reunion to once again welcome Jesus to our world.

Many members of my immediate family usually attended church with me Christmas Eve. My sister is usually in town. My parents when they were mobile would come over from their church. My children who attend other churches came in and we worshiped as a family. Oh, not just a family of origin, but as part of the family of God!

I often see military men and women far separated from their families and so many children who grew up in church back for the Christmas. To one and all I say welcome, welcome home! Welcome to the family reunion of the Family of God!!

Here is a short video clip welcoming one and all home.  
**ROLL "WELCOME HOME"**

Indeed, welcome home to the family of God.

Home, what is “home”? I thought of all the different types of families that I have known through the years. I’ve known single parent families, traditional two parent families, grandparents raising grand children. Homes made up of adopted children. Guardians taking in lost children. Foster home families, and older people who have taken on roommates and proclaimed themselves to be family.

Home is a set of relationships where our loved ones are. It is where and with whom we feel at peace and safe.

“Home” is also a state of mind or feeling. When I smell pine trees I get such a feeling of peace and home because as a child, my dad was a forest ranger, and we lived in pine forests. Others have shared with me what triggers in them feelings of home: smells, sights, sounds, tastes, touches, people.

But “home” is indeed where our loved ones are. In the Christmas story Jesus was born in a barn and that place was his home for a night or two, because that was where Mary and his adoptive dad Joseph were. Have you ever thought of that, Joseph was Jesus “adoptive dad” because God was his Father?

Jesus’ next home was Egypt because his parents took him there to escape the murderous evil of King Herod. Egypt was Jesus’ home only in that his parents were there. He then moved to Nazareth and then during his ministry all over Israel.

Eventually, he became a person with nowhere to lay his head, and yet, he was surrounded by the Family of God. He was surrounded by those who did the will of God.

For Jesus said, *“Who are my brothers and sisters and mother?”*

*“Whoever does the will of my Heavenly Father.”* He was surrounded by his disciples.

Home is where our relationships of love are. Here's an adoptive family.



Sometimes people ask me where I am from, as to hometown. I moved around a lot as a child, with my dad being a forest ranger; so in my mind I always hesitate to answer. But I say New Mexico for I was born there, but home has always been where those that I love are, which now is in Arizona.

Jesus Christ's true home is in heaven, as is ours, for Jesus has gone before us to prepare a place for us there. And that home in heaven will not be complete until Jesus has all of his brothers and sisters at home with him. There's going to be a lot of people there!



God made us to be in relationship with each other.



I have referred to us as being "herd animals". How many teenage girls does it take for one to go to the bathroom? Usually 2 or 3. Some animals are perfectly fine living alone almost all of their lives. We as people are not so created. God created us in his image and God is made up of Father, Son and Holy Spirit eternally in relationship, so part of our nature is to need one another. To be human in the fullest sense is to be in relationship with one another.



If we don't have a family of origin, or our family of origin was broken, or much less than perfect, we as humans seek to create what we missed, and fix in our lives what was broken. We try to make good positive families like were illustrated in the video. I see that video as what is enjoyed by some and striven after by others and hinted at in the church family. This is what one day will be enjoyed by all in Heaven.

And God has given us the power to create such families. In fact **God has given us the power to adopt ourselves into the Family of God.**

Now how does this all relate to the scripture from John that was just read? In it we learn that God the Creator of the universe comes to earth as the Word, as the baby Jesus. We learn that **the very inward nature of God is to *speak!*** The very inward nature of God is to *communicate*. **The very inward nature of God is the *Word*.**

Our ***God's nature is to express and reveal Himself in Creation and in the re-creation of human souls.***

God's nature is to create and *communicate* with us. To be in relationship with us and he found no better way to communicate than to be one of us.

Our God is not just the remote cosmic God of Creation, but an intimate God who has been one of us and knows our frailties and knows our weaknesses and even wants us to call him Abba, Daddy, Father and even for some "friend" and others whose dad's were less than perfect "mother". Whatever works to make it sink in that God loves us as the best loving parent would.

And so we can see and know and touch God in Jesus Christ. The message from God is **"I love you so much, I became one of you"**.

He became one of us to be in relationship with us to be able to love us in person.



To know God in Jesus Christ is to not only know a lot of intellectual ideas and knowledge. To know God in Christ is to enter into a real relationship with Him that changes us!

Verses 10 and 11 state, *“He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.”*

But we can and we do welcome Jesus! As the words of our Advent Candle lighting song say, *“Welcome to our home. Welcome to our home.”* The deeper and more profound mystery for which we need to give God thanks and praise, is again, that God has given us the power to adopt ourselves into the Family of God.

Verse 12 states, *“But to all who receive him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,…”*

God has given you and me the power right here and right now to choose to be adopted into the family of God. What marvelous power to be able to choose to be Jesus’ sister or brother to have God as our Father. We have the power to do this by simply receiving Jesus into our hearts.

John 3:16 just a few verses after the ones read tonight say, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have everlasting life.”* Say that with me.

To receive Jesus in your heart is to believe in him: his birth, his life, his teachings, his death on our behalf and his resurrection that grants us new life. It grants us adoption into the family of God.

I ask you if you haven't used the power that God has given you to be adopted into the family of God to use it today! Receive Jesus! Tell Jesus you want to be a part of his family!

Your invitation today is to become adopted into the family of God. Your challenge today is to invite and welcome others in!



I had a friend named Virgil Schatz. He always went to a church while on vacation. Well one Sunday morning he walked into a church and there were no greeters or ushers in the lobby; so he picked up a handful of bulletins and read the name of the church and began warmly welcoming everyone who came in. Hi! Welcome to First Church.

**We are all part of the same family we who have received Jesus Christ, who have believed in him to save us from our sins. We belong in every church and every church is our home.** Our job, our challenge is to welcome others home. Our job is to create and recreate the family of God for all who would come like what Dee Berman experienced as a lonely missionary student at Christmas whose story is in our bulletin. Our job is to adopt others in and remember God has given you the power to do this. So we are going to give and receive one more Christmas gift.

I want us to take a moment and welcome each other into the family of God. No we aren't going to stand and shake hands again. I believe we can welcome one another even more deeply by sharing with each other some of our happiest Christmas memories. I want you to sit and share with one another one of your best Christmas memories.



I will start and then give you all a minute to share. Mine has to do with food. When I was a child I don't remember my Grossman ever being present for Christmas in person, but I do remember the box of Christmas treats she sent ever year. The box always arrived the week before Christmas and was full of cookies and homemade candy and donuts and donut holes. It brought us close to her even though we were separated by 2000 miles. It said to me, "Now it is Christmas."

Take a moment now and share with one other a favorite or most favorite Christmas memory. When you hear the music please grant me your attention again.

## SHARING

May you have been blessed as you shared a blessing!

In Jesus Name Amen!

We are now going to welcome Jay and Gale Hill into the Family of Vista Church. May they come forward now.