

Greg Laurie: Is Jesus at Home in Your Heart?

In 1954, Perry Como released his single with the now-familiar lyrics, "Oh, there's no place like home for the holidays/ 'cause no matter how far away you roam/ When you pine for the sunshine of a friendly gaze/ for the holidays, you can't beat home, sweet home."

I don't know what comes to your mind when you think of the word "home." But for many years of my life, the first 17 years effectively, I didn't really have a place I would call home. We lived in houses. We lived in apartments. And we lived with other people.

I came from a broken home. My mother was married and divorced seven times, and she was always going from husband to husband. So, I moved from California to New Jersey. Then I moved from New Jersey to Hawaii and from Hawaii back to California again.

My mom was always out every night, so I never knew what it was like to have a family meal. I went out and got my own food at the same restaurant. And I always ordered the same thing: a hamburger, a vanilla malt and french fries.

When I told my friends what I ate every night for dinner, they said, "Man, you're living the good life. We wish we were living your life. We have to go home, sit at the table with Mom and Dad, and eat horrible vegetables. And you're eating a hamburger and french fries with a vanilla malt!"

But I secretly wanted their life. Sometimes I went to my friends' houses and had dinner with them. I didn't even like the food they ate, but I wanted to be in a family setting. It was so alien to me.

One Christmas memory that stays with me was one Christmas

morning when my mother was passed out from a night of drinking. The house smelled of stale smoke and alcohol, and we had one of those white artificial trees with a light that slowly turned and changed different colors. Some funky song played in the background.

As I sat there looking at that tree and looking at my mother, I thought, *It's got to get better than this.*

And it did get better than that. When I met Cathe and we got married, it was the first time I knew what a home was. We didn't have a fancy home. We had threadbare furniture, some of which came from the Salvation Army. Then we had two sons. And Cathe and my boys became home for me.

I've been in a lot of homes over the years. I've been in the homes of very wealthy people and in some very humble homes as well.

I'm a chaplain with the police department, and one day, they called me to the luxury home of someone who had committed suicide. It was a perfectly decorated home with an ocean view. It was seemingly everything a person could want in life. But it was a house, not a home.

Then I thought of the time when I was in Ethiopia for a pastor's conference. A local pastor invited us to his house, which had dirt floors and no real windows. They had a fire burning inside the home, which filled it with smoke. He prepared a modest meal, which for him was a precious gift to us. That house was a home.

When Jesus walked this earth, you could say that he was technically homeless. He said, "Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20).

In heaven, Jesus had the greatest of all homes. For example, Jesus told His disciples, "Don't let your hearts be troubled.

Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?" (John 14:1-2).

Jesus left his home in heaven to make a home in our hearts. Maybe you've heard someone use the Spanish expression "*Mi casa es su casa*," which translates, "My house is your house." When you become a Christian, this becomes reality. Jesus doesn't merely want to stay in your home as a guest; He wants to own your home.

Sometimes we feel reluctant about this because we're afraid. We think God will mess up everything and ruin our lives. No, in reality, he will make it better.

Robert Irvine, the host of the television show *Restaurant Impossible*, knows how to fix restaurants that are failing. Restaurant owners will ask him to help, and he'll come in and basically say, "Look, I'm going to change this place." Sometimes the job requires a lot of construction and modifications.

But when he invites the owners back for the big reveal, they're always excited to see the results. The mess they couldn't fix was transformed, because Irvine knew what he was doing.

That is what happens when Christ settles down in our lives. He might do a little demolishing. He might remove a few things. But then he replaces them with something so much better. You won't miss them. Just wait for the big reveal, and let the Lord have his way in your life.

Jesus was born so we could be born again. Let Him be at home in your heart.

As the Christmas hymn says, "Let every heart prepare Him room." Will you prepare room for Him today? {eoa}

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