

## “Christmas Dreams”

Isaiah 7:1-16 Mathew 1:18-25

Scott B. Martin - December 23, 2007

There is a question that seems to be all around us this time of Year. Get almost any group of people together and I can almost guarantee you that you will hear them asking one another “**Are you going home for Christmas?**” Even if you don’t hear the question it seems that our thoughts quite naturally turn to “home” at Christmas. Thoughts of home dance in our Christmas dreams like sugar plum fairies.

Even our secular Christmas songs seem to reflect Christmas dreams of home. One of the best known was recorded by Bing Crosby in 1943, during WWII. It rose to number 3 on the charts that year and the following year made it to 19. Listen to this song by Bing Crosby....

I’ll be home for Christmas, you can plan on me.  
Please have snow and mistletoe, and presents on the tree.

Christmas Eve will find me, where the lovelight gleams.  
I’ll be home for Christmas, If only in my dreams.

*“I’ll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams.”* Home can mean many things this time of year. What does “home” mean for you? It might be the home you knew as a child? It might be where you live right now. It might be some place you’ve never even experienced, but dream about.

What does this home look like? Who is there? What is happening?

Let’s take some time and share as a Faith family our dreams of home at Christmas.... *(take time for the congregation to share)*

Thank you for sharing your dreams of home this Christmas season. Did you notice the joyful anticipation and deep longing in the voice and words you heard? In many cases this joyful anticipation and longing is based on

past experiences of home but I also suspect that for some, if not all, it comes from an even deeper place.

There may be dark shadows in these dreams of home and yet the dreams stubbornly persist and push back the shadows. Loved ones who were with us in Christmas' past may not be able to be with us now for any number of reasons from death to divorce to simply living far away from us. Some homes have been broken by arguments and ill feelings. Then there are those who may never have experienced a happy home. Yet these Christmas dreams of home persist.

*“I’ll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams.”* It was a special favorite of the troops overseas. It was the most requested song at USO shows. The *Yank*, the GI magazine said that Crosby accomplished more for military morale than anyone else of that era. Can’t you see those troops in WWII in their foxholes, ships and planes, surrounded by the horrors of war longing for “home.” Now we are in another war in Iraq and Afghanistan and soldiers there no doubt are finding a tear in their eyes as they hear the words “I’ll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams...” Christmas dreams of home now fill the hearts souls of another generation.

Then there are the illegal aliens from Mexico, here by the millions, picking our fruits and vegetables, working in construction, sacrificing their own comfort to send money home to wives and children to help them have a better life. This Christmas season many of them would like to be home but are afraid to re-cross the border to their homes in Mexico, lest they be unable to come back to work and so they too will be home for Christmas only in their dreams. This Christmas they will be lifting up their prayers to the Virgin of Guadalupe far from home.

These dreams of “home” stubbornly persist in spite of want or absence. They often persist even in abundance, even when we are surrounded by family and friends. Sometimes we discover, after the turkey or ham is eaten, after we take down the tree, after family and friends go home, that the longing is still there. Something is incomplete. Something is still missing. The longing for “home” is still there.

Rev. Martin Copenhaver, a fellow UCC minister, writes“**...what we long for is not merely a Christmas from our past, but a gathering up our past, present, and future into a harmony that is not achieved in the days of our lives. What we desire is not merely to be with those we love, but to be united with them in a way that is not possible even when they are present. It is to be together in ways that are impossible in this life, and we can only barely approach in our dreams. What we long for is to have the broken and scattered pieces brought together in ways that we are unable to do. And that is why I have concluded that our homesickness is, in some way, a yearning for God.**” (from a sermon by Martin Copenhaver delivered 12-19-2005 at Wellesley UCC, Wellesley, MA)

Could it be that this is what was behind the shepherds willingness to leave their sheep and go to Bethlehem to see the one the angels sang of? Could it be that this was what was behind the magi’s long journey from their homes far away, to come to a manger in cave in Bethlehem? Could it be that this is what behind the dreams of Christmas that GI’s past and present, illegal aliens and yes, perhaps even our own dreams of being home for Christmas?

**“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,’ which means, ‘God is with us.’” Amen.**