

C Advent 2	<b>God's Promise Is Good</b> Luke 1.68-79  by Tim Isbell	Preached 12/10/2006
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Thesis: We can trust God's love and destination for us – and not be disheartened by apparent instances to the contrary.

*(I preached this one on the Sunday when our church had it's traditional Christmas Musical, so it is a little shorter than normal.)*

## **Experiences**

*(I told some personal experiences of going into some uncomfortable territories.)*

### **1st grade**

As a young child, I was a very picky eater and also kept each type of food from touching another type. In the first grade (there was no kindergarten in the 1950's) my parents sent me to school to eat a school lunch. Lunches always contained something I didn't like, and the food touched! To make matters worse, the teacher ran team-contests where for our team to have respect all its members we had to clean up all our food. The peer pressure was excruciating.

### **3rd grade**

My folks sent me to a 1-week church camp, and I was very homesick. It seemed like a foreign country. The food was even worse than at school. I cried all the time and refused to participate in virtually anything. Finally, the camp got tired of me and sent me home in the middle of the week.

### **Young adult**

Somehow I survived childhood, went to college and became an electrical engineer, and the company I worked for sent me on a 3-week business trip to Asia (in the 1970s). Now I was in foreign countries and the food was even stranger and it not only touched - it was all mixed! I traveled in fear for three weeks and came home 13 pounds lighter.

As my career progressed, I learned to travel quite well, spending several weeks in Asia and Europe most every year, and traveling extensively around the States, too. Today I eat a wide range of food, and I love to mix it up. But to tell the truth, I'm still a homebody.

### **By contrast, let me tell you about my friend, George**

I have a close friend of Danish ancestry. His grandparents immigrated to the States and homesteaded in Wyoming, where he grew up. He cherishes memories of life in his Wyoming family.

When George was about 50 years old, he made a business trip that included some time in Denmark. When he got back, he told me how shocked he was that as soon as he stepped foot in that country he felt “at home.” As he moved around the country, stayed in the hotels, visited the customers he continued to have this feeling of home. Part of this was probably the architecture and furniture, which reminded him of what was in his grandparents’ and parents’ houses. And part of it was just the personalities of Danish people, which reminded him of his family in Wyoming.

## **God came to some strange and unholy territory, too**

### **Mt. Sinai**

God wasn’t afraid like me, but it must have seemed like strange territory compared to heaven. Everyone who got close to God was afraid of him. His scared people witless.

So, they asked for Moses to serve as the intermediary. They said, “You talk to God, then come back and tell us what he wants. We’re scared to death of him! Just tell us what he says, and we’ll agree to it, to anything!”

*Read Heb 12.18-21*

### ***In a sense, God was out of his element - out of holy heaven.***

He was visiting a dysfunctional outpost of his creation. Even though God wasn’t afraid; neither was he comfortable among such unholiness.

It’s like if you or I walk into a group of preschoolers, and every one of them takes one look at us and starts crying and running as far away from us as they can get. We wouldn’t be afraid, but we sure would feel uncomfortable.

### ***God was surrounded by people he wanted to get close to, but who he scared witless.***

You see, we humans have an instinct that when we get near something so holy and powerful as God we cower in fear.

It’s good for us to understand these Old Testament stories and get some perspective on how holy God is.

But being in God’s proximity doesn’t make us holy.

### **Christmas is another time when this holy God entered unholy territory.**

Read Luke 1.68-70, 74b-75.

This time God came in the form of Jesus and he was approachable. He even transformed people, redeeming them from sin and brokenness and making them holy. When Jesus invited people to know and follow him, many did. And many today respond to this same offer of redemption and friendship.

Earth is still not God’s home, but he continually launches little communities that trust and follow him. They’re called local churches. These are places where there is fellowship with this holy Creator and among his followers.

These local churches are a foretaste of what's to come.

## **Recently there was a headline in the Chicago Tribune.**

### ***City Tries to Pump Up Its Workers Down Under***

The article described a pep rally for the sewer workers of Chicago. There was a new boss who wanted to lift the spirits of sewer workers. He gathered 800 of them in the Plumbers Union Hall. There was a big banner on the wall: "Bringing Sewers Above Ground."

### ***None of us spend our day under the streets of San Jose working on sewer systems,***

- But some of us work or spend our week in difficult dirty places.
- Some of our schools are spiritually darker than an underground tunnel.
- So are some homes.

It takes its toll on us to work and live in such situations.

### **Christmas tells us that these are not our true home.**

You and I have another address, a permanent address, and someday all who follow Christ will live there.

Read Rev 21.1-4

### **When we get there, we'll feel like George on his Denmark visited. Only more so.**

### **In other years I went back to Asia.**

By then I'd learned how to look up those little Christian local churches, call them up, and worship with other Christians I'd never met before.

And do you know how it felt? A lot like home.

## **Here's what I hope we all grasp this morning.**

2000 years ago our creator came in the form of Jesus.

- He was holy, perfect, and still completely approachable.
- He came to remind us of our real address, a place of complete holiness.
- To offer us a visa and a ticket to return home someday.

### **In the meantime:**

#### ***He cleans us up so we are not afraid when we get there.***

Indeed, as we walk up road to heaven the front gate will swing open wide and our Heavenly Father will run out to greet us - like the father in Luke 15.

#### ***He invites us to connect to one of these little Christian communities – a church.***

There we get and give support, and receive a foretaste of life at our permanent address

in heaven.

**If something in this description resonates in your heart,**

***It's because there's a place deep inside everyone of us that recognizes this description of home.***

Like George recognized his heart's connection to Denmark.

Like I recognized my heart's connection whenever I visited a local church anywhere in the world.

***Christmas offers us a way to find out our true home...***

And it offers us a path back home.

**Why not receive it?**

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