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Luke 1:15-18
Message title: Warmth at Home
12/24/23

Discussion Questions:

1. What do most people like about being home for the holidays?
 2. Do you think most people think they have or can have a “warm relationship” with God? Did you? Why or why not?
 3. From the 3 points regarding warm relationships involving choice, closeness, and value for others, which hits home for you?
 4. Conversely, why might relationships sometimes “grow cold”?
 5. Look at Romans 12:9-10. What is something from this verse you can do or you have experienced in your life to foster warm relationships?
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Teaching Notes:

The series theme this month has been “home for the holidays”.
Why does being at home have such value?

You can feel at home even if you are not at home...

...Or you can feel NOT at home even if you are home.

...but I think all of us on some level long for feeling at home.

Big Idea: Jesus wants you home with Him.

Feeling at home means feeling...

... content, comfortable, & connected.

...and it is nearly always linked to warm relationships.

Message title: Warmth at Home

Over the last month we have looked at these different elements of being at home in Him:
contentment, comfort, and connection.

...*The 4th & final element today is warm relationships.*

Home is a place w/warm relationships: family, friends, pets.

“Research in social neuroscience suggests the two most important personality traits in another person is warmth and competence”

Warmth/loyalty was associated with *greater* relationship quality than having a partner who met *extrinsic* ideals like being attractive, adventurous, or wealthy

“whether or not a partner meets your extrinsic ideals is *totally unrelated to your satisfaction* if your intrinsic ideals are met.” Psych Today

What is a “warm relationship?”

It is **kind, affectionate, friendly, & receptive.**

it is also trustworthy, supportive, understanding.

Warm relationships are powerful, we need them.

It is how we are wired...

It is no surprise it is what God desires for us and from us, as well.

God doesn't want some religious, transactional, you do this for me and I will do that for you, relationship.

Listen to the warmth in this verse...

12:9 *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;*

...God wants warm, loving, authentic relationships.

Let's end our series on “home for the holidays” where the whole idea for going home for the holidays started...and learn a little about warm relationships.

There was a young couple who were going home to Bethlehem. This was where they were from, this is their city, their people.

Did they feel at home? Content? Comfortable? Connected?

God literally is with them, and He sends people to them...

...And this is often how God works...

...God sends people to us to remind us of His love for us.

The ones that come to Mary & Joseph are shepherds.

15 *So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.”*

1. **A warm relationship requires choices.**

These shepherds heard the news and made the choice to go.

If you want warm relationships...

...you have to make a choice to be warm.

God chose us, so we could choose Him.

With other relationships, we make choices too...

...we choose to give and to receive...

...we choose kindness, friendliness, and being supportive.

...these are the choices that lead to warm relationships.

The second dynamic of a warm relationship is in v16...

16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

2. A warm relationship requires getting close.

You can't have "a warm, distant relationship".

These shepherds heard the good news and chose to get close.

And this really is the Christmas story...

...God came close, so close He became one of us.

John 14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. **2** My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. **4** You know the way to the place where I am going." **5** Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" **6** Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Jesus came close to bring us close.

The final element of a warm relationship is in v17-18...

17 Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. **18** And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

3. A warm relationship requires showing value.

They made it "Widely known" & "people marveled" who heard!

Angels and shepherds and wise men and prophets all demonstrated the tremendous value of Christ and this good news

They traveled great distances, they gave costly, gifts, they left their flocks, they shared the news, they came to adore Him.

God demonstrated how much He valued us by giving us His only begotten son.

1 Peter 1:18 For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. **19** It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.

And in the same way God demonstrated to us our great value...
...We realize that every person also has great value...
...and we should treat them accordingly.

**This year there were many ways our church valued people...
...one of them was to the kids in Maui.**

**When you doubt your worth or the worth of someone else...
...Go back to that manger and remember the cross.**

**To enjoy that warm relationship with God and others...
...We just follow the shepherds' example...**

Make the choice, come close, and show Him His value by putting your faith and life in His hands as your Savior and Lord.

If you have never made Christ your home, this is a great day to truly come home for the holidays.