

## Streaming All the Way | Week 3 | ELF

**(Start with Clip of Elf from 0:03:44-0:06:15)**

Have you ever felt like you don't belong? I believe the need for belonging is something built into each of us.

Belonging is what makes a family strong. And, the love within it, stronger.

Belonging is what makes winning as a team sweeter. Because, celebrations are better together.

Belonging makes movements powerful. Because, a people united in purpose, always overcome the obstacles in their way.

But, sometimes we find ourselves feeling like we do not belong; at home, at work, at school, and sadly even with the church.

This lack of belonging makes believing for anything better harder, and makes the heart grow colder.

In an age where we can buy almost anything we want to fill our stockings and put under our trees, belonging is something that we cannot find under the tree, and seems to be in shorter supply than ever before.

Think about this with me for a second...Why is Christmas such a treasured tradition?

Families from all over travel countless miles to return home – to a place they belong.

The same thing happened over 2000 years ago leading to the first Christmas night in a little town called Bethlehem.

**Luke 2.1-3 | In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire<sup>[a]</sup> should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. <sup>3</sup> So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town.**

Following the long, lonely walk across a cold desert for a young couple, Bethlehem draws near and belonging is about to be born to everyone...

(Illustration) | Maybe your family is like ours and every Christmas morning before we exchange presents, we read the Christmas story together. If not, let me encourage you to start that tradition this year.

Whether you have read the story every year or this is your first time turning the pages of the

Nativity, in the gospel of Luke, we find the history of Christmas begins not with Santa and his elves, but a couple returning home.

Sometimes overlooked in the story of Jesus' birth, is something very important.

**Luke 2.4-5 | Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, <sup>5</sup> to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant.**

Joseph belonged to Bethlehem.

Those who belong bring others into belonging. Because Joseph belongs, now Mary belongs too.

But that's not all. Luke continues, **Luke 2.6-7 | <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup> Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.**

Now, because Mary belongs, Jesus belongs to Bethlehem, too.

Which is incredible, because 700 years before the birth of Jesus, a prophet named Micah wrote,

**Micah 5.2 | "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."**

Micah is talking about The Messiah. The Savior. The One who will bring belonging.

Because multiple Bethlehem's (like the one in Zebulun in Joshua 19.15) are mentioned in Scripture, naming Bethlehem Ephrathah narrows the accuracy of this prophecy down to only one town, the same one where King David was born hundreds of years before Jesus.

Jesus belonged to Bethlehem before Joseph was even born.

Long before Joseph belonged to Bethlehem, Jesus was prophesied to belong to Bethlehem. And, while Joseph is known as Jesus' earthly father, Jesus' true Father is someone quite different.

For Buddy, his father is also quite different than he expects...

**(use clip from 0:40:27-0:42:12)**

Despite injury, trauma, and shedding of blood, Buddy's joy of meeting his true father is overwhelming to watch and even more infectious to behold as he invites a little girl to join him in his Christmas spirit.

The funny thing about Buddy, He didn't try and change who he was. I'm a human, raised by elves. He didn't try to fit in or be something he wasn't.

Some of us are afraid we do not belong. And, that feeling is damaging because it deceives us into believing that maybe Jesus and followers of Jesus will not accept us if they know who we really are.

But, another thing Buddy teaches us, the only thing worse than feeling like a fraud is being discovered as one...

**(use clip from 0:36:31-0:38:18)**

Truth be told, that is just a hilarious part of the movie! Still, it is a genuine fear for some of us that God, Jesus, or Christ-followers cannot wait to bring us down and shatter the legos of the lives we have built up to impress others.

Thankfully, **Jesus did not come to just belong, He came to bring belonging.**

That's right for someone here today. You belong, too.

And the sooner we realize we belong, the sooner we will realize who we were always made to be.

Here is why this is so important. Once I move from, do I belong to I do belong...my life takes on new purpose.

Just as Jesus' goal wasn't to just belong, my goal becomes to bring belonging to those around me.

**(use clip from 0:52:01-0:53:47)**

When was the last time someone asked you that...Where are you from?

Christ-followers, shouldn't the joy of belonging to the Creator of the Universe make us stand out like an Elf in a snowball fight?

Shouldn't our desire to bring others into belonging look like we are laying cover fire of acceptance and grace all around us?

Shouldn't we bring others into belonging just like Jesus did, time and time and time again?

**Am I bringing belonging?**

We can go through story after story in Gods word...Zacchaeus, Mary Magdalene, the Centurion's servant, the woman caught in adultery, the lame man at the city gates, the woman with the issue of blood, and countless others...here is what we see.

**Belonging comes before believing.**

Surrounded by a world that blames them for their circumstances, all these broken people wanted was to belong.

Belonging is a gift Jesus wrapped up for us and put under a different tree.

Jesus came to bring belonging to everyone who believes.

Sure, some people might look at you in the way the world looks at Buddy the Elf if you start to believe, but in the end, belief cannot be ignored.

**(use clip from 1:26:05-1:29:18)**

**Belonging thaws the coldest hearts.**

While it is widely reported that we will never know what happened 2000 years ago in that tiny town of Bethlehem, everyone who was there knows exactly what they saw...

Just like everyone who meets Jesus knows who He is – and the belonging He brings to their life – not just this Christmas, but for all eternity and to everyone who believes.

We believe He willingly gave His life as a sacrifice to make it possible for everyone to have a right relationship with God forever. No matter what you have done and what has been done to you, all you need to do is believe.

If you find yourself afraid or unsure about Jesus and the church, do not be afraid. We bring Good News today...Jesus came so that you can belong.

If you're listening today and you have the belonging part down...Who can you bring into belonging this Christmas?