

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI
Pastor Mark Gartner
Sermon for SS Christmas Service – December 15th, 2013

Luke 2:6-7

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Grace, mercy and peace are yours because of the Christmas Gospel, Amen.

“There is no room for you.” Those are some pretty harsh words, aren't they? They can even be kind of mean when they are spoken to a kid who wants to join the club, play the game, or be part of a team. “There is no room.” Those words can be tough to take when you need a hotel for the night or a place to stay when you are tired or the weather gets bad. “There is no more room.” Whether it is a restaurant, or a relative's house, or something as important as a bomb shelter - these words are words of rejection! And so the simple, yet very important question, I want each of us to consider today is this:

Theme: Is There Any Room For Jesus?

- 1. We haven't always had room for Jesus**
- 2. Jesus has graciously made room for us**

We've read and heard and many of us have even recited the account of Luke chapter two so many times that we know the story well. Caesar, Augustus that is, wanted to count the people so he gave the order that everyone go to his home town to register. So off went Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem and as they say you know the rest of the story. But this is a story that I believe we have often romanticized in our heads. We focus on the beautiful and heartwarming details that make wonderful books for children.

There is the manger and animals and angels and shepherds and father and mother, and, of course, the little baby. Yet, there is one question and detail that I haven't really thought about or ever focused on very much. How did Jesus end up among the animals? Why can we literally say Jesus was for all practical purposes born in a barn? Why did they end up laying this newborn babe into a manger - a feedbox? We are simply told: **“While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”**

I've heard and read those words **“there was no room for them”** so many times without realizing how this is truly a shocking truth. The shocking part is not that all the inns were filled in Bethlehem. It's not that Mary and Joseph were probably late arrivals or that the small city was invaded with so many visitors. It is that there was no room **“for them”** - especially when you consider just who the “them” is here! God was about to be born of a woman. The eternal Word took on flesh and was about to enter our world. And the world did not even have a room for Him! The One who simply said: **“Let there be light”** and there was, couldn't even get someone to say he could have his own bed. The One who appeared in a burning bush and rescued hundreds of thousands of people from slavery in Egypt, couldn't find a single person to rescue him from the night air and give him a warm place to stay. The eternal God who made the heavens and the earth and has given us all we have, didn't get the world to give him as much as His own crib.

We might make excuses for the inn keeper and say he certainly was not aware that God Himself was inside the womb of Mary. We might try to defend the relatives of Joseph saying they were there first and if they gave up their room where would they stay. We might absolve the rest saying why would they give up their room to strangers. But even if they didn't know this mother was about to give birth to Holy One called the Son of God, Mary was still pregnant and about to give birth to her first child. Even if they

had no idea Joseph and Mary were chosen to be parents of Immanuel (God with us), they knew that they had just arrived after a long hard journey. Yet, no one was kind enough to offer their bed to Mary and her child. No one, in love, told Joseph that his family could share or have their room. There was no room for them in the inn! How sad! How pathetic! There was no room for Jesus. All that was given was a place among the smelly animals.

Is this not just another reminder of the kind of world in which we live - a dark world of sin? Isn't it just one more reminder of how selfish and self-serving mankind can be? Doesn't this show once again how too often peoples' priorities are making sure they take care of their own comforts first? Doesn't this leave you and me acknowledging our own sin as well? Is there room for Jesus? Is there room for Jesus in our Christmas celebration, in our lives, in our hearts? Or do we get to be as busy as the innkeeper and miss out on being up close to hear the good news of great joy for all people? Are we ever too preoccupied and selfish that our priorities get out of line? Do we have time for Jesus, to worship Jesus weekly and serve Jesus daily, - or is there no room for Jesus? At times, we have to admit there is no room for Jesus in our thoughts, in our words, and in our lives? We are just as sad and pathetic. We too would cast God's own Son out with the smelly animals. Is there room for Jesus? Many times we would have to say there is not!

2. Jesus has graciously made room for us

However, the real question today is not if we have room for Jesus, but does Jesus still have room for us, selfish sinners like us? Christmas reminds us the answer is a resounding "Yes!" That is why Jesus came into our dark world of sin and death. That's why the eternal Word became flesh, why God became man. That's why He humbly was laid as an infant so small into a manger - a feedbox. He came to save us - from sin - from the devil -from ourselves. He came to give us a room in God's kingdom. That's what Christmas is all about! God sent His own Son into the world knowing full well that his own would not receive Him.

God did it only for one reason and one reason alone - because He loves us. He has put us first. That's why He sent Immanuel - why He sent our righteousness. It is why He sent a Savior to pay the price of our selfishness and self-serving on a cross - a Savior told on that cross there is no room for you as He was rejected by God to suffered the hell our sins deserve - a Savior whose death would pay for our sins in full. God's love for us is why He sent the One who would defeat death and became our resurrection and life. Jesus, for whom there was no room in the inn, makes sure there is room for us - room for us to enjoy forgiveness, life, and peace with God. The Savior came to make room for us - in mansions that He is busy preparing for us even now!

That changes everything when it comes to the question of is there room for Jesus, doesn't it? How can we not love Him who first loved us? How can we not make room for our God who was willing to be a baby and one who at His birth did not even have a bed on which to lay His head? How can we not make room in our Christmas celebrations for the Christ-child who entered our dark world of sin to save us?

How can we not make room to worship weekly on earth the Savior, who has made room for us in heaven? How can we do anything but make room in our thoughts, and in our words, and in our hearts and lives for Jesus, not just on Christmas Eve, but every day? Our Savior has come! May there always be plenty of room for Jesus. Amen.