

Make Room for Him!

- Luke 2:1-7
- When you hear the Christmas story, you get a picture in your head of what things must have looked like at the birth of Jesus. Sometimes it's interesting to find out how others envision that scene. I read recently about a children's class that heard the Christmas story and sang the beloved Christmas carol, "Silent Night". They were then asked to draw what they thought the nativity scene might have looked like. One little fellow did a good likeness of Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus, but off to the side was a roly-poly figure. The teacher, thinking that the boy had somehow worked Santa Claus into the scene, asked him who that was. He said, "Oh, that's Round John Virgin!"
- We said last week that all of history is His story. We see that in the text today. God moved on Caesar Augustus, who thought he was god and in control of his little Roman empire, to decree that all the world should be registered. Why would God do that? Because as Paul would write later, "the fullness of time had come, (and) God sent forth His Son..." (Gal. 4:4) But why the decree? To get a certain young couple to travel from their home in Nazareth to the place of the father's ancestry, in Bethlehem? Why? So that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. Why? (Am I starting to sound like a 4 year old with the questions?) Because God had promised 700 years earlier that Bethlehem of Ephrathah would be the birthplace of the Savior!
- "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. 5 And he shall be their peace..."
- And because every word is established in the mouth of two or three witnesses, God spoke the same thing to Isaiah at around the same time:
- "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit." OK, so Jesus was born in Bethlehem. But why?
- Because God keeps His promises. All of them. Some promises God makes, He fulfills the very same day: "Today, you will be with Me in paradise." But most promises God makes, He takes His time with, working through the years and the generations. Some call that slowness. God calls it mercy: "The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any would perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come..." (2 Peter 3:9-10a)
- The preparation for the birth of the Messiah started centuries earlier. And when the fullness of time had come, the culmination of every event in his story since creation, and Joseph and Mary got to Bethlehem, just as God foreordained, and her time was near when she would deliver... there was no room in the inn! Did God forget to book a room? What is going ON, here?!
- A Sunday School was putting on a Christmas pageant which included the story of Mary and Joseph coming to the inn. One boy wanted so very much to be Joseph, but when the parts were handed out, a boy he didn't like was given that part, and he was assigned to be the inn-keeper instead. He was pretty upset about this but he didn't say anything to the director. During all the rehearsals he thought about what he might do the night of performance to get even with this rival Joseph. Finally, the night of the performance, Mary and Joseph came walking across the stage. They knocked on the door of the inn, and the inn-keeper opened the door and asked them gruffly what they wanted. Joseph answered, "We'd like to have a room for the night." Suddenly the inn-keeper threw the door open wide and said, "Great, come on in and I'll give you the best room in the house!" For a few seconds poor little Joseph didn't know what to do. Thinking quickly on his feet, he looked inside the door past the inn-keeper then said, "No wife of mine is going to stay in a dump like this. Come on, Mary, let's go to the barn." -And once again the play was back on track!

- I don't think that's the way it happened. There really was "no place for them in the inn." Luke doesn't comment on this, just states it matter-of-factly. There was no room for Jesus to be born in the inn because that was God's plan just as much as that town and these two parents and that time were part of His plan! The hymn writer asked, "Why lies He in such mean estate, where ox and cattle are feeding?" And then the answer: "Good Christian fear, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading." What is the Word pleading? He cared less whether He was born in a stable or a palace. He came to be born in our hearts. He came to take up residence in our lives. So, we cannot blame the innkeeper for not having room for the Christ child to be born. What we must ask is whether WE have made room for Him. Let's look at three characters in the Christmas story who made room for the Christ child, and ask that we too might open our lives as they did. I have written the three points as petitions, prayers to the Lord to work in our own lives this Christmas.
- **Lord, open my mind to make room for Your truth.**
- A 2009 poll of 7,441 Protestant clergy showed a wide variation in belief. The following ministers do NOT believe in the virgin birth: American Lutherans 19%, American Baptists 34%, Episcopalians 44%, Presbyterians 49%, Methodists 60%, Millard Erickson says, "Next to the resurrection, the most debated and controversial event of Jesus' life is the virgin birth." Thank GOD that Joseph wasn't a Methodist pastor. Let's look at how he responded to the news that his wife was going to have a virgin birth.
- Matthew 1:18-25. Because it appeared that he was betrothed to an unfaithful woman, Joseph had every right to break off the relationship, if not have Mary and the unborn baby put to death by stoning. But "as he considered these things," God sent the truth.
- **Lord open my eyes to make room for Your visitations.**
- Luke 2:8-16.
- Max Lucado wrote, The announcement went first to the shepherds. They didn't ask God if he was sure he knew what he was doing. Had the angel gone to the theologians, they would have first consulted their commentaries. Had he gone to the elite, they would have looked around to see if anyone was watching. Had he gone to the successful, they would have first looked at their calendars. So he went to the shepherds. Men who didn't have a reputation to protect or an ax to grind or a ladder to climb. Men who didn't know enough to tell God that angels don't sing to shepherds and that messiahs aren't found wrapped in rags and sleeping in a feed trough.
- When is the last time the Lord surprised you with something? Maybe it would happen more if we would open our eyes to see, and if we would make room for wonder again.
- **Lord open my heart to make room for Your treasures.**
- Luke 2:17-19.
- Mary treasured up (guarded; kept; watched over) all these things (rema, the spoken word of God), pondering them in her heart. (the center of her being was taken up by this great news about her Son, the Savior, who is Christ the Lord).
- In 1994 two Americans answered an invitation from the Russian Department of Education to teach morals and ethics (based on Biblical principles) in the public schools. They were invited to teach at prisons, businesses, the fire and police departments, and a large orphanage. It was nearing the holiday season for the orphans to hear for the first time the traditional Christmas story. They told them about Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem and finding no room in the inn, the couple went to a stable, where Jesus was born and placed in the manger. Throughout the story, the children, according to one of the Americans, "sat in amazement as they listened. Some sat on the edges of their stools, trying to grasp every word." As a follow-up activity to the story, each child was given three small pieces of cardboard to make a crude manger. Each child was also given a small paper square, cut from yellow napkins which the children tore into strips the paper and carefully laid them in the manger for straw. Small squares of flannel from a thrown away nightgown were used for the baby's blanket. From pieces of tan felt a doll-like baby was made.

As they made their way around the room to observe the children this is what one of the Americans

noted, "All went well until I got to one table where little Misha sat. He looked to be about 6 years old and had finished his project.

As I looked at the little boy's manger, I was startled to see, not one but two babies in the manger. Quickly, I called for the translator to ask the lad why there were two babies in the manger."

The observer goes on to note that Misha very accurately recalled the story that had been told until he came to the part where Mary put Jesus in the manger. "Then Misha," it is noted, "started to ad-lib. He made up his own ending to the story as he said, "And when Maria laid the baby in the manger, Jesus looked at me and asked me if I had a place to stay. I told him I have no momma and I have no papa, so I don't have any place to stay.

Then Jesus told me I could stay with him. But I told him I couldn't because I didn't have a gift to give him like everybody else did. But I wanted to stay with Jesus so much, so I thought about what I had that maybe I could use for a gift. I thought maybe if I kept him warm, that would be a good gift.

So I asked Jesus, "If I keep you warm, will that be a good enough gift?" And Jesus told me, "If you keep me warm, that will be the best gift anybody ever gave me. So I got into the manger, and then Jesus looked at me and he told me I could stay with him – for always."

As little Misha finished his story, his eyes brimmed full of tears that splashed down his little cheeks. Putting his hand over his face, his head dropped to the table and his shoulders shook as he sobbed and sobbed. The little orphan had found someone who would never abandon or abuse him, someone who would stay with him – FOR ALWAYS!"

- Song by Micah