

“Make Room” (Luke 2:1–20)(12.24.22) Christmas Eve

Luke 2:1–7 (NIV84) *The Birth of Jesus*

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)³ And everyone went to his own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,⁷ 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.

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **“Make Room”**

INTRODUCTION:

Hospitality was a big deal in the time of Jesus' birth. And by hospitality, I don't mean only

towards family and friends. The Lord instructs His Chosen People to invite the stranger and alien into their homes because they were once in that predicament in Egypt. But we are told that there was no room at the inn for a young woman about to give birth after an arduous journey.

This situation is pretty strange because this census required Joseph to go to his hometown. You would think that there were relatives of his there. Of course, Bethlehem was not like the White Horse Pike in Galloway and Absecon where there is motel after motel after motel. We don't know the details, only that there was no room at the inn for Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus.

The common tradition places Jesus in a stable. This is based on the fact of the manger, which is a feeding trough for animals. You might make a case that the shepherds would not have been welcome at most places so a stable would be fitting for them too. Some scholars argue that the stable was a nearby cave. Others say it was common practice to have the place for a family's animals on or near the side of the house.

Maybe Joseph's family rejected them because of the untimely pregnancy. It may have simply been that the census visitors completely filled the little town of Bethlehem. We don't know much. But

what we do know, is that there was no room at the inn for the Savior of the Word.

AND – unfortunately, the same could be said today. Too many people reject Jesus. They have no room for Him IN them. They are too full to make room for Jesus.

BODY:

There is a man we will call Frank. Frank thought he would try to find Jesus. He started opening all the closets at his house. They were filled with coats, hats, gloves, all kinds of clothes and empty boxes. One of the closets had sports equipment including his prized golf clubs and bag. There were toys and games. But Jesus wasn't there.

Frank went into his basement to look for Jesus. There was a washer and dryer. There was an old oil tank that had never been removed even though they switched to natural gas years ago. One side of the basement had furniture they no longer used or needed and some that Frank intended to fix someday. But Jesus wasn't there.

Frank thought maybe he had to look up to find Jesus. So, he went up into his attic. It was one of those with the fold-down stairs. They were not very convenient, so he didn't go up there much. There were many boxes and containers of their

seasonal decorations: Christmas lights and stuff. A scarecrow for Halloween. You know the sort of things. Also, there was quite a bit of dust. But Jesus could not be found in the attic.

The garage was a double-car attached one, so Frank went there next. The minivan and SUV took up most of space. It was hard to fit the motorcycle in what was left. Then there was a shop-vac, car wax, and all you need to keep the vehicles neat and clean. But Jesus wasn't there.

In the backyard there was a good size shed. Not only was there a lawn tractor, there were rakes, shovels, hoses and anything needed to maintain that lush lawn. Frank also had a workbench and one of those roll-around tool boxes. But Jesus wasn't there.

Frank was getting a little tired but he drove over to the Self-Storage facility. It had one of those burglar-proof locks on it. As he lifted up the door, a couple of boxes tumbled out into the street. Frank had not been there in about six months because there really wasn't much in there that they used. A lot of it was left from when his parents had died and he kept what he couldn't sell or give away. But Jesus wasn't there.

Before he left, Frank started to pick up the boxes that had fallen out. One of them had opened up.

Someone had written nativity on the side with a black marker. When he looked inside and saw all the pieces, a wave of nostalgia for his childhood Christmases washed over him. Frank saw that the ceramic stable had broken. He put the box in his car. He would take it home and fix it.

On the way home, Frank drove by a church. There was a banner blowing in the wind that said, "Bethlehem Baby – The Christmas Story." The play was scheduled for that very night. He didn't know why, but he felt compelled to go to the play.

Henry was always too busy with work. The holiday season was extra busy. As a Certified Public Accountant, people were always calling him for tax advice before the end of the year. He thought his wife was teasing him when she called him a workaholic. Yes, Henry worked 60+ hours most weeks, but work is good, right? Besides there was that huge mortgage AND he had two kids in college and two in high school. College tuition was insane.

Henry could not be separated from his cell phone. You could never tell when a client might call. Not only that, he kept his calendar on his phone. He kept his task list on his phone. That cell phone was always ringing, beeping, or buzzing. It seemed to never let up. His calendar was full. There was no

room for anything else. There certainly was no room for Jesus.

Henry didn't want to go, but he felt he had to go. He had promised an important client to go to a play she was directing at a big church. He figured he could swing by on his way home and put in an appearance. Henry didn't think he could afford the time but he couldn't afford to lose the client either.

Mildred had been grieving the loss of her husband. Slowly but surely she began to isolate herself. At first, she was just slow returning calls, but it evolved into staying home alone more and more. People were just trying to help, but they didn't seem to understand her needs. Mildred found a new friend in Johnny Walker.

Johnny didn't ask any questions or put any demands on Mildred. There were no expectations. At first, there was that warm feeling as it went down and her anxieties ebbed away. Gradually, she had to drink more and more to find that same safe place. Now, her friends tried less and less to reach her.

Late one morning, Mildred looked into the mirror and didn't recognize herself. She had let herself go. Her face was puffy and she had put on weight from a lack of exercise. She hadn't been to the beauty salon in a long time and her hair was a

mess. Walking to the kitchen, she looked around and noticed the house didn't look much better than she did.

Mildred realized she needed help. She had seen the symptoms in some of her family. Where should she go? She tried one of the 12-step programs. It was hard to go on a regular basis and that Higher Power wasn't working for her. What about that church that had a Celebrate Recovery Program? Maybe Mildred would try them out.

Mildred started going to their meetings. The Christmas season was especially hard for her as she missed her husband so much. There was a meeting on Christmas Eve and she didn't want to be alone. After the meeting, people seemed to linger longer than usual. As some stood outside smoking, they noticed the parking lot was filling up. Mildred and a couple others walked around to the front of the church to see all the commotion. With some hesitation, they went in and found seats in the back, where no one would notice them.

There were a lot of children in the play. They were very cute in their animal costumes. Many of them were costumed as sheep and some older children were trying to shepherd them. There was singing and smiles. It was not very professional and a little chaotic, but there was a lot of enthusiasm.

Frank was sitting near the front and he remembered a Christmas play he had been in as a boy. Henry had sat where he was sure his client would notice him. He kept checking his watch wondering if he had been there long enough. Mildred was soaking it all in.

After a while – a young boy walks to the center of the altar and a spotlight from above encircles him. In a sweet voice he speaks. Luke 2:8–20 (NIV84)

⁸And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Frank had a rush of warm feelings as he remembers his boyhood Christmases with his family.

Henry got an unusual feeling, a strange pain in his heart. He thought it might be what he had heard called conviction.

Mildred's eyes filled with tears. But this time, they were not tears of grief. They were not tears of guilt. They were tears of joy as she realized she was not alone. In fact, she had not been alone all this time. Emmanuel meant God with us.

CONCLUSION:

To follow Jesus, we need to follow the light. In "Little Town of Bethlehem," we sing:

3. How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is given;
so God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

4. O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in,
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
o come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel!

Every Christmas Eve, we close our service with the Christmas Carol, Joy to the World. We sing, "Let every heart prepare Him room." I call on you tonight to be deliberate – make room for Jesus. Invite Jesus into your Living Room.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.