

“A Place for Christ” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Christmas Eve December 24, 2023

- I. **Luke 2:7** – “And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”
- II. **I used to work in the hospitality industry.**
 - a. One of my first jobs was being a front desk clerk at the Super 8 in Durango, Colorado.
 - i. Durango sits way down south, right at the base of the San Juan Mountains.
 - ii. Many people go there throughout the summer months to visit the Four Corners area, along with taking a trip on the Silverton Railroad.
 - iii. In my time working there, each day included a huge number of reservations, check-ins, phone calls, and guest needs.
 - iv. What I remember most about that job though, was not how busy it was, but how many people I had to turn away who didn't make any reservations.
 1. It boggled my mind how many people were traveling along, even with kids, and they had no reservations for lodging.
 2. Some days, I would turn away 50 people asking if we had any rooms available.
 3. At times, they would come in at 10 or 11pm, and every place within a 100 mile radius as booked solid.
 4. I would often help people find lodging if I had time... and one particularly busy weekend, the best I could do for them was send them 3 hours south to Albuquerque!
 - a. The dad just looked at me and said, “What am I supposed to do, sleep in the car with my whole family?”
 - b. Yes, I'm afraid, there was no room at the inn.
 - b. Joseph and his family were traveling without reservations on that fateful night 2000 years ago.
 - i. They couldn't get online and find a great rate, or even call ahead and book any reservations.
 - ii. The best they could do was make the 65-mile journey by foot, or perhaps with a donkey, and just pray that they would find somewhere to shelter when they arrived.
 - iii. It's hard to imagine what Mary was thinking during this journey.
 1. First of all, she probably knew that her baby was due at any time, which added a huge amount of stress to an already stressful trip.

2. When you consider the high rate of mortality for birth mothers at that time, leaving home without reservations to stay somewhere could end up killing both mother and child.
 3. It wasn't too long ago that I remember an expecting mother who decided against taking a trip because she didn't want to chance being in another city if her baby was born...
 - a. Just think of how scary and risky it was for Mary as she could have gone into labor at any point on her trip... maybe out in the middle of nowhere.
 - iv. Yet, they made it to the town of Bethlehem, as Joseph was required to go back to the city of his family line... the line of Judah... and the line of King David.
 1. Unfortunately, the town was packed with others being counted, and so Mary and Joseph found shelter in the only place available...
 2. We don't really know the exact type of place it was, but we assume that because Jesus was laid in a manger, He was probably born in a stable... but animal stalls could be connected to a home, inside a cave, or even in the outdoors with no cover.
 3. What we do know is that Immanuel, God with us, was born in the flesh.
 - c. As you think of our Savior's birth... just imagine the smells... the sounds... the surroundings...
 - i. Jesus is the long-awaited King from the line of King David – royalty – who came into the world in the most unsanitary, lowly conditions we can think of.
 - ii. Our Savior King, born in squalor and filth, which is very fitting.
- III. **The Christmas story is supposed to be a contradiction.**
- a. First we have God Himself... holy, perfect, all powerful... situated in the perfect place of heaven.
 - b. Then, at the perfect time, He decides that He will become one of us... all mixed in with the brokenness, a world of sin and destruction and death... a world of squalor and filth.
 - i. But He doesn't come in a show of great power and authority... but as an infant.
 - ii. God, in order to save all humankind, became an infant in the most humble, lowly way possible.
 - iii. What does that tell you about our God?
 - iv. What does that tell you about how He loves you?
 - v. What does that tell you about how much He wants to fix the problem of sin and death?

- c. Many times we hear that we are sinners – or fundamentally broken people because of sin – and it upsets us...
 - i. So we think, God loves me just the way I am!
 - ii. Or, God is all about love, and He knows I'm a *pretty good* person.
 - iii. Yet, the truth is much deeper than just being who we are and staying like that... God wants to save us from the sin sickness that would separate us from Him forever.
 - 1. The truth is that sin corrupts everything in the world – and it started in the very people God loved...
 - 2. In the beginning, people made the decision to push God out in the cold – there was no room for Him as they rebelled against Him and opened the door for sin to spread to everything and everyone.
 - 3. None of us can deny that evil and brokenness exists, but it's hard to admit that it is in us too.
- d. The trouble for our world and for us individually is that left to our own desires, we would just let God know that we're all full here, so You need to move on.
 - i. That is the contradiction of the Christmas story – not only that the preeminent Being in the universe was born in squalor – but the world He came to save wanted nothing to do with Him... There was no room for Christ in the hearts of people.
- e. Is there a place for Christ in your heart?
 - i. In the hymn, Joy To The World, we sing, "Let every heart, prepare Him room" – and maybe we need to prepare our hearts for Jesus to take a prominent place in us.
 - ii. With a world and society around us that keep our hearts firmly fixed on them... we can easily be "too full" to make any space for the presence of God in our lives.
 - iii. Jesus came into the world that had no room for Him, and He also came into your world when it had no room for Him.

IV. **By God's grace, the sin and rejection in our hearts do not win the day.**

- a. No, we are saved as we come to faith in Christ Jesus.
 - i. Jesus the Christ Child would be born in those humble beginnings, but grow up to challenge the heart of every person – that we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God...
 - ii. The only answer – the only path to forgiveness and healing is believing that Jesus really died on the cross to pay for our sins... and as we believe, the door is wide open for a place for Christ.
- b. God's choice was very clear, in the greatest rescue mission of all time, He would send a Savior in the line of King David.

- i. As the Bible tells us, Jesus was born as both a man, but also God Himself – Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23) – and the Word was God and became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:1;14)
- ii. Today as we celebrate this gift of God born in the flesh, we give thanks for the place He occupies in our hearts – but much more than that... the place that we occupy in God's heart. Amen.