



Sermon: No Room at the Inn (Advent 3) - Pastor Todd Goldschmidt

Children's Service 10:15 am – December 11th, 2011 – At [Living Hope Lutheran Church](#)

Luke 2:1-7 (NIV1984)

¹ 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.



Sermon: No Room at the Inn?

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No room in the inn. Ever had that experience? I have. It was late August, 1978. My twin brother, Eric, and I spent a few days with our grandma in Excelsior, MN before heading out with her and her friend in her light-yellow LTD she bought on the cheap at a hail-sale. The feather-light power steering was nice touch! We drifted down I-94 through the farmsteads of southern Wisconsin, arriving in Madison late that day. Expecting to find a room in a city of such size, we discovered to our dismay that there was “no room in the inn”—not the Holiday Inn, the Ramada, or the Motel 6! We piled back in Mormor's prairie schooner and headed to Watertown—home, at the time, of our Synod's pre-seminary: Northwestern College. After searching high and low for a place to stay thereabouts, we came up empty again. So, back to Madison we drove in the hopes that maybe a room had become available due to a last minute cancellation. But no such luck. We spent the night in a hotel parking lot, two elderly ladies in the front and two young college-bound boys in the back. For once, I was glad that grandma's car was such a huge tank!

No room in the inn. Imagine how Mary and Joseph felt so many moons ago when they reached their ancestral hometown of Bethlehem and learned that there were no vacancies in any of the City of David's inns. An eighty miles trek, by foot if not by donkey, from their carpentry shop in northern Nazareth, his wife about to deliver her first child, and they couldn't find any room in the inn. Mary must've been miserable! Yet the Bible simply states: “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.”

For most of us, those words evoke the isolation, harshness and difficulty which Mary and Joseph must've faced at Jesus' birth. Images of a cold, windswept wintery landscape and the Holy Family's futile attempts to find suitable lodging so late in the game fill our Western hearts with sympathy for the new mother and her baby. But historians inform us that the circumstances of that first Christmas might not've been as bleak as we imagine. Jewish society at the time of Jesus' birth was traditional and eastern, particularly hospitable to the members of one's own clan. Families often maintained a historic homestead, where the patriarch welcomed travelling kin for some R&R after a long journey. The house itself was frequently a multi-level home built around a courtyard and designed to afford lodging for the occasional guest. In hilly areas like Judea, a cave adjacent to the courtyard might shelter livestock from the cold and protect them from poachers and predators. It's quite possible, then, that the baby Jesus—while born in very humble conditions—was safely delivered in the protective shadow of the clan's ancestral home.

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 9am)

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Page 2 of 3



In the years prior to Jesus' birth, God's people Israel had known much trouble and sorrow. For centuries, the sins of the nation blew hot across the land, like desert winds: idolatry, immorality, and indifference to God's Word and ways. As Luke's Gospel opens, 400 years had passed since the last prophet had spoken to Israel. Four centuries of spiritual drought! Like a cool breeze that blows ahead of an approaching thunderstorm, God began to put in place the final pieces of His plan to rescue the human race. The baby was born! The Messiah had come! The rain of God's pardon and peace had begun to fall! It would fill the earth with the fruit of repentance and faith, as the Holy Spirit worked to bring more and more of God's sons and daughters into His kingdom of grace. Jesus came as the Son of Man. He fulfilled all of the Old Testament ceremonial laws that served as shadows of His reality. He grew in grace, mined the sacred Scriptures, revered His Father's house, obeyed all earthly authority and stood in Jordan's baptismal waters. All this He did *in your place*. The first Adam left us with sin and death. Christ, the second Adam, gives us His holy life & right standing with the heavenly Father. Rejoice that Christ was born *for you!*

Suppose you were asked to nominate "the greatest sentence in the English language." What words would you pick? A line from a famous speech, like Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address* or Dr. Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech? Perhaps words of Shakespeare or your favorite book, movie, play or poem. If you put some thought into it, you might even come up with the angel's words to Joseph, the town's carpenter in Nazareth, who was pledged to be married to a young virgin named Mary. At least he thought she was a virgin. When she "was found to be with child," Joseph—described as "a righteous man [who] did not want to expose [Mary] to public disgrace . . . had in mind to divorce her quietly." But God had other plans for Joseph! He dispatched one of His heavenly messengers to reveal the mystery of the incarnation: "Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife," he said, "because what is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:18-21). Jesus; Yeshua; Yeschi, maybe, to His playmates. *Savior* to us!

How blest we are to hear that glorious good news again! Your Savior lived a life of total self-sacrifice with you on His heart every step of the way. Rejoice that the baby Jesus—the best baby ever born—came to save you from your sins! Let that truth, and the hope and peace it brings, fill your heart with a deep and abiding joy no matter what curve balls life throws at you. God's pitching 'em, and He'll never strike you out! He'll just work by His Spirit to make you a better, more patient hitter. He loves you dearly! The gift of His Son is all the proof you need! Since He gave you His very best on that first Christmas long ago, He will give you everything you need to walk by faith and not by sight until you reach your abiding home in heaven: courtesy of the One who was "placed in a manger, because there was no room for [Him] in the inn! Amen.