

# Finding Room For Jesus

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**Bible Text:** Luke 2:1-7  
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Let's turn again to the passage that we've read together, Luke 2, and to study verses 1 through 7 this morning. Let's just read together verse 6 and 7 again.

6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Let's pray.

*Father, we again as we approach this text, remind ourselves that this is the word of the living God and that You have inspired this word for us and You have taken peculiar care to preserve this word for us down through the ages. And so we pray that we would come, and we would treat Your word with the reverence that it deserves and help us to worship You even through hearing. We pray, Lord, that You would bless us and open our ears to receive Your truth this morning. So we ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.*

We were back in Europe earlier this year visiting my family, and it was the time of our wedding anniversary and so we had a trip to Germany and to Berlin, and I looked around and booked a room in a hostel. Hostels in Germany are actually quite nice and it was a good price which I liked, but when we got there I realized why it was such a good price, it was because we had to share the room with four other backpackers. Not the best anniversary surprise I ever arranged for my wife. And so realizing my error, I quickly began hastily looking around for alternative accommodation, and so I walked around the streets of Berlin trying to find any other hotels in the area with not a single vacancy. I started to phone a few places as well, and all with the same response, no vacancies in the whole of Berlin. It turned out one receptionist told me that the reason was because there was this huge conference going on, a medical conference, there were doctors and pharmaceutical representatives from all around the world were flying into Berlin. There was not a single vacancy in the whole city. And so we were stuck with our bunk bed and four backpackers with their bunk beds. Again, not the best anniversary surprise for my wife, but as I reasoned to myself quietly as I drifted off to sleep in my bunk, at least we did have somewhere, unlike the situation we have here in Luke 2 facing Joseph and Mary when they came to Bethlehem. There really was nowhere. There was, as it says here, no

room for them in the inn. No place for Mary and Joseph to stay so that Mary could give birth to Christ. And so in the end they are forced to go out into the barn, or maybe it was even a cave, the place where the animals would go. This is the amazing scene that the Bible presents to us to describe the birth of Messiah, the God-man, the second person of Trinity, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. When he was born into this world, there was no place for them to go.

It's an amazing narrative. It's a familiar one in many ways. We've all read this story many times. We've heard it. We've seen enactments of it. But it's a story with some important spiritual applications for us today, and three particular lessons that I wanted to draw out from these verses this morning relating to the time of Christ's birth, the place of his birth, and the response to Christ's birth. Three things this morning: the time, the place, and the response.

Let's begin with the first lesson. This is considered the time of Christ's birth and a lesson in God's sovereignty. The time of Christ's birth and a lesson in God's sovereignty.

1 ... it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

So this is the scene that we have here that Luke is describing for us. The angel Gabriel, just to give you a little bit of the context here, has already appeared to Mary earlier on in Luke's account back in chapter 1, verse 28. Gabriel came to Mary. This, you know, the teenage Jewish girl, she's about 14-15 years of age perhaps, and he's come to Mary and he's told her that she is to have a child. This is chapter 1, verse 31, "you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS." So this child that she's going to conceive will be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit overshadowing her womb in that supernatural, marvelous, miraculous way, so that Christ will be formed in her. And, "He will be great," the angel says. He'll be "the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." And so then this is going to be no ordinary child. This is the Christ child. This is the promised Messiah, the anointed one who will sit on David's throne. This is the very Son of God.

And so Mary, even though she is overwhelmed and she is fearful, of course, nevertheless, in obedience to the call of God, she submits to this command. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," she says, "Let it be unto me even according to your word." And Joseph too, her fiance, he also eventually agrees. He doesn't know what's happening at first, does he? We were thinking about this last week. He hadn't met the angel. He didn't know what had happened. He just heard that his fiancée was pregnant and his immediate thought was it must be by another man and so just and righteous man that he was he thinks, "Well, we need to get a quickie divorce here and put her away secretly." That was his plan but then the angel appears to Joseph and brings him up to speed tells him that the child conceived in her is by the power of the Holy Spirit and that this child is going to be a savior. "You

shall call His name Jesus because He will save His people from their sins." And so Joseph then when he hears this, he agrees to take Mary as his wife, and that's where we left it last time when we were thinking about these Advent narratives.

Now we come into Luke 2 and we go forward now nine months, nine months have passed and here is Mary, she's at full term. She's about to give birth any moment, and so here is Luke, good historian that he is, he's putting this into context for us now. Remember what Luke says at the beginning of this book, he wants to give his friend Theophilus a very detailed account of all the things relating to the life and work of Christ. And so here he's giving Theophilus, and us, of course, as well, the readers, the historical context. He's putting this into the framework of the day. That's what we have in verse 1, "it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered." Caesar Augustus, he's a key man. He's the most powerful figure in the world at that time. That wasn't actually his name. His name was Gaius Octavius, but they called him Caesar Augustus because Caesar was actually just a title. It's like a king or emperor or Pharaoh, and Augustus is actually an adjective. It's a descriptive word. So it means revered one or honored one.

So Caesar Augustus means revered Caesar, honored Emperor, honored King, or something like that. His real name was Gaius, Octavius, and he was a brilliant man. He was a brilliant leader who really ruled the Roman Empire for 45 years or so, turned it from a Roman Republic into a vast empire stretching around the world and bringing with it this far-reaching system of justice and world peace. It became known as the Pax Romana, which really did bring peace and prosperity to many nations of the world in those days. And so Octavius was a successful leader, so much so that he began to develop around him this, well, encouraged by his own efforts, we have to say, this cult of emperor worship so that the poets, they wrote songs about him and the historians wrote very flattering narratives about him, and in the end many people began to offer a sort of a worship and a devotion to him. He was even described by some of them as the savior of the world. And so this is the man who's in charge at this particular point. It's Caesar Augustus, and Luke is telling us here that the decree went out from him that all the world should be registered. So it's a census. This is a head count, basically registering every person in the Roman Empire for taxation purposes. He wants to extend his kingdom further, wants to strengthen the military, wants to build up the infrastructure and all of these things and so to do that, of course, he needs money and to get money he needs to know how many people he can tax so that he can then get revenue from them. That's the bottom line. That's really what this is all about.

He's doing this for taxation purposes and so he passes a decree that all those within his empire, which was pretty much most of the known world at this time, they are to be registered for taxation purposes and this is done, it says, while Quirinius was governing Syria. So he's sort of the local representative responsible for administering, ministering this in that part of the world at that time. And so the decree is passed in verse 3 and as a result, all went to be registered, it says, everyone to his own city. So people are on the move now. People are set in motion. People are moving from different places to other

places. And in the middle of all of this caught up in all of this providentially, is this man Joseph and his fiancée Mary.

Verse 4,

4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem,

And so Joseph, then because of this decree, he now has to head back to Bethlehem. That's where he's from; that's where he could trace his roots to all the way back to Bethlehem. He's of the line of David. He's of the house of David and David, of course, came from Bethlehem. If you remember earlier this year, we were studying the book of Samuel and Samuel is looking for a new leader, a new king. He wants a man after God's own heart and so he goes to Jesse, Jesse, the Bethlehemite, and he says, "Show me your sons," and so he brings them all out and eventually brings out David. David then was from Bethlehem. And so this is Joseph's line, this is his family tree. Joseph can trace his roots all the way back there, but even more significantly Christ the Messiah will come from there. Messiah when he's born into the world will be born into the house of David just as Gabriel had told Mary in chapter 1, "The Lord God will give Him the throne of his father. David, and with that He's going to be born in the town of Bethlehem." The prophet Micah, of course, told the people that, the famous prophecy chapter 5, verse 2, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting." And so this is going to be the place. Bethlehem is going to be the birthplace of Messiah just as the prophet had foretold all of those years before, and here in Luke 2 we see all of that coming to pass.

All of those ancient prophecies are now being fulfilled, ironically, through a decree passed by this man, Caesar, Octavius, this man who thinks he's the great one, this man who thinks he's the savior, this man who thinks he's the greatest one in the whole world. He's actually doing the bidding and preparing the way for the King, the ultimate King. He's not quite as powerful as he thinks he is. Sometimes, you know, world kings and emperors and leaders need to be put in their place. I don't know if I told you the story about Teddy Roosevelt. This was 1910. He was on a hunting trip to Africa, and while he was there King Edward VII in England died, and Taft, and William Taft in America contacted Teddy Roosevelt, wired him, asked him if he would cut short his hunting trip in Africa and go to England to attend the funeral. And so he agreed, and he sailed over to England, and while he was there for the funeral, he happened to bump into the German Emperor Wilhelm II and the German emperor cordially invited Teddy Roosevelt to come and call on him the next day and he said, "Come to me at 2:00 o'clock sharp because I can only spare you 45 minutes." And Teddy Roosevelt said, "Yes, I will be there at 2:00 o'clock sharp because I can only afford you 20 minutes."

Now sometimes earthly kings need to be put in their place and that's what we have here. This king who passes a decree thinking he's doing this for the building up and extension his own kingdom, he doesn't realize he's being put in his place here. What he's doing, he's

actually serving the King of kings, making the way, laying the foundation for the real King's kingdom, a kingdom that as Gabriel said to Mary, will never ever end. That's what he's doing here. He doesn't realize it, of course. He doesn't know anything about Mary or Joseph or the Holy Spirit overshadowing her womb or any of those kind of things, but all of Caesar's actions, all of Quirinius' actions, are being directed by God to bring Joseph and Mary into Bethlehem so at that particular time she can give birth to the Lord Jesus Christ who will be born in Bethlehem of the house of David.

And so this is, to bring it back to the beginning, this is the point that we're making here. Think about the time of Christ's birth. It's a lesson in sovereignty. Sovereignty. That's what we're talking about here, the outworking of God's sovereignty, and by that we mean his rule, his reign, his control over all things, even over kings and rulers and potentates, and those who think that they rule and reign. They do so, but they only do so under him and all of their actions and all of their decrees are ultimately controlled by him. The king's heart, remember Solomon says that in Proverbs 21, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord and He turns it like a watercourse whichever way He pleases." That's what he does. So all their decrees and all their legislation and their tax plans and all of them controlled by him to fulfill his plans. The big players in the palaces, also, you know, the small players on the backs of donkeys like Joseph and Mary, and the journey they make. All of this is all interwoven. God is controlling all of these things to fulfill his plans.

The same as in our lives as well. All events controlled by him. All of our journeys all governed by him being interwoven to fulfill his big plan. You know, we have a young fellow in our church and he came all the way over here from Kenya to study in New Haven at Yale, and while he was here, he met a Mormon, I think it was, and the Mormon got talking to him and got him thinking about spiritual things, and then he ended up listening to a sermon by a Christian preacher called John Piper and he was converted listening to that sermon and now he's a member of our church. And through contact with him, we have another young man in our church who is now going over to Kenya next week to spend time with the church over there. God controls all of these things, all of our movements to fulfill his greater plan.

Well, think about my own life. Remember being in a bookstore in Metropolitan Tabernacle in London many years ago, and there was a conference on and I went to the bookstore during one of the intervals and the the key speaker was in there, Joel Beeke. So I went over and said I was going to speak to him, and we started talking about seminary and he said, "What do you think about applying?" And so I did. That was 16 years ago and here I still am in the United States; I've got two American children now. God oversees all of these things. He controls them all. We need to remember that, don't we? It's very health. It's a very practical truth for us to get hold of. Our times are in his hands, see even when they don't look like it. You know, Mary having to make this long journey. She's almost full term. She's got to travel six or seven days, 80 miles on a donkey. It wasn't something she probably looked forward to. But all of that being controlled by God. The things that we don't like, the bad news we get, or having to leave a job and take a new job, having to move house and go to another place. All of these things we can remember ultimately in God's hand.

William Lloyd put it this way in his hymn,

"My times are in thy hand;  
my God, I wish them there!  
My life, my friends, my soul, I leave  
entirely to thy care.

My times are in thy hand  
whatever they may be,  
pleasing or painful, dark or bright,  
as best may seem to be.

My times are in thy hand;  
why should I doubt or fear?  
My Father's hand will never toss  
His child a needless tear."

So there's a practical lesson we can learn from the time of Christ's birth, a lesson in God's sovereignty. There's help for us here in this birth narrative here in Luke 2.

That's our first point: consider the time of Christ's birth, a lesson in God's sovereignty. Secondly, consider the place of Christ's birth, a lesson in Christ's humility. Verse 5, "Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem," verse 6,

6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

This is a lesson in Christ's humility. Joseph and Mary, they make this long journey, then from Nazareth to Bethlehem. It's about a 90 mile trip, the scholars tell us, across difficult and dangerous terrain, probably would have taken six or seven days traveling slowly, of course, because Mary is great with child, and at last they come into Bethlehem just a few days before she is due to give birth. But of course, with so many other people coming into Bethlehem at this time, and Bethlehem wasn't a place that was geared up to take a large influx of people, it wasn't a great tourist attraction or anything like that, all of the spare accommodation at this particular time has gone. And so you see there at the end of verse 7 that little phrase, "there was no room for them at the inn."

We need to make a point here about that word "inn." It's not what we think of when we think of the word "inn." This isn't Holiday Inn Bethlehem or even Day's Inn or Hampton Court or anything like that. You know, that nice little building you see off the freeway with three or four stories and a lobby, and, you know, a pool and a Coke machine, free wifi. It's not that. The word here actually refers to a small, could be a private dwelling,

could even be a relative. I think more likely this is a small guest house. The word literally means breaking up of a journey, and so it's probably a simple basic lodging place where travelers could stop and bed down for the night, these kind of places. They would have one or two large rooms where you'd put down a straw mat and maybe with other people in the room you'd sleep there, with your animal would be tethered up outside in a shed and that's probably what this is, just a simple structure where people would sleep with something like a shed or a cave outside for the animals. That's what this was. And of course, with the census going on and more than usual number of people coming in, there isn't the same amount of space. And probably most likely, you know, the Roman officials coming there for the census have actually taken up most of the accommodation themselves.

And so Mary and Joseph, they get there and there's no room. And so what to do? Mary's great with child, she's about to give birth, but there was no room. No room for them at the inn. What to do? We're not actually given a lot of detail, just says, "she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger." So this must have been outside in the place where they would tether up the animals. A stable this could have been. Some say it might have even been in a small cave with a low-built wall around the front of it to stop the animals wandering off. Something like that, a small cave, a stable, a barn at best, and there it is that Mary, the mother of Jesus, gave birth to her child and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, it says, bands that would be strips of cloth wrapped around the body of the child. That was actually quite normal, quite natural in those days. They did that for warmth and security. You know, you think about the babies being very snug and secure for nine months and suddenly being extracted quite violently into the cold night air. That's a very traumatic experience, and so what they would do is immediately and quite tightly they would wrap these bands around the body and the limbs of the baby for comfort and warmth and security. That's why they did this.

The point here is this was all normal, this was all natural. Mary treated her son like any other baby because in a physical sense, he was. It's a human baby with a human body and with human features and functions just like you or I have, real red blood pulsing through his veins and real human DNA in his cells, real hands, real eyes, nose, mouth, all of these things. That's what's being described here. This is the humanity of Jesus Christ. In the fullness of time, Paul says in Galatians, God sent forth his Son born of a woman. That's what we see here. Normal natural childbirth, a human savior. This is the Son of God becoming the son of man and entering into time and space and confining himself to a human body, 8 or 9 pounds in weights, 20+ inches or whatever in length. Real human body. Wesley says, "God contracted to a span incomprehensibly made man." The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. That's what we have here. This is the incarnation. The second person in the Trinity coming down to earth becoming bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh the Bible says. Why? In order to save us. In order to redeem us. He had to. He had to take a human body in order to offer it as a sacrifice for sins. He had to have a human body in which to rise again from the dead, having paid the price for our sins. You see, the humanity of Christ is vital to our salvation. We're not saved by his birth, we're saved by his death, but without his birth, there could be no death, and then from that there

could be no resurrection from the dead. He had to have a human body to be a substitute, to be a savior for sinners.

One of the commentators I read puts it this way, "Without His birth He could never die or live again. There could be," listen to this, "There could be no crucifixion nor resurrection without the incarnation." Or Martin Luther, Martin Luther puts it like this, "Whenever you are concerned to think and act about your salvation, you must run directly to the manger and the mother's womb, embrace this infant and virgin child in your arms and look at Him born, being nursed, growing up, going about in human society, teaching, dying, rising again, ascending above all the heavens and having authority over all things." So Luther's saying, "Go to the manger. See the importance of the incarnation." We need a human savior. We need a savior to take flesh and to live a perfect life and to offer that as a sacrifice and then to rise from the dead. We need the Son of God to become the son of man so that we, the sons of man, can become the sons of God.

Augustine once put it that way, and that's what these verses are teaching us, the humanity of Christ but also, you know, as we think about the place of his birth, I want us to think about this lesson in humility. Look at these words again, she "wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger." A manger. The Greek word there means a feeding trough. That's what this was, it was an animal feeding trough, the place where they put the food for the donkeys and the calves, confirming for us that this indeed was the place outside the inn, this is a cave or a stall or a barn or someplace like that where they tied up the animals while the people slept inside. That's what this was and it was in those bare primitive conditions that Mary gave birth to Christ and she wrapped him in these swaddling clothes and then she laid him there in the manger, in the feeding trough. The Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, the one by whom this world was created, the one by whom nothing was made that was made, the one who upholds all things by the word of his power, the one who one day everyone who lives in this world will bow the knee and will confess, every tongue will confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father. He, when he was born into this world, was born in an animal stall, and they laid him in a feeding trough, the place where donkeys and camels put their snouts to eat their hay.

This is the amazing humility and meekness of our Lord, that he would humble himself in that way. I mean, he would even come down as a man at all, take human flesh, that's amazing humility. Paul can never really get over that, can he? Philippians 2, remember those amazing words? He speaks about our Lord being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself, humbled himself to be born in this way in a stable in a feeding trough. What meekness. What lowliness. And this is really just the beginning, this is the beginning of a life of humiliation. He grew up in a poor family. He was the son of a carpenter. When he begins his ministry, he's got practically nothing but the clothing that he's wearing. Home? Well, no. Foxes have their holes, birds have their nests, but the son of man had nowhere to lay his head. He was despised and rejected by men. They persecuted him. They sought to kill him, and when they did kill him what did he have?



He had only the clothes on his back and they cast lots gambling over those, and when he died, they buried him in a borrowed tomb.

His whole life was a long life of humiliation and so perhaps we shouldn't actually be surprised to see it begin in this fashion amid straw and a manger. Spurgeon says this, "Would it have been fitting that the man who was to die naked on the cross should be robed in purple at his birth?" So Spurgeon is saying actually there's something quite in keeping about this that really tallies with the rest of his life. It would all go on like that. It was a life of humiliation. Another commentator, Ryken, says this, "The humility of His birth was the whole pattern of His life. Jesus humbled Himself to the very death and there are rumors of this already in His birth. The sufferings that commenced with His incarnation culminated with His crucifixion. The same body that was wrapped in swaddling clothes was also wrapped in a burial shroud. The manger points to the cross and to the grave."

And so all of these things, you see, the stable and the manger and the smell and so on, all pointing us ahead to what he came to do, what would be his life's work to go to the cross, to bear the load and the stench of our sin. What an odor that is in the nostrils of Almighty God. Jesus came into this world to take that, to bear that for us. He was made to be that, wasn't he? That's what the Bible says, he was made to be sin for us. And so perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that when this Savior, this substitute, this Savior for sinners, when he actually came into the world perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that he wasn't born in silken sheets with soft downy pillows, but actually it was in a stable amidst the smell and the stench and the dirt and the straw because what he came to do was a rescue act. He came to rescue us from the stench of our sin.

And so we can learn that here can't we? This scene teaches us so much about our Lord, the nature of the death that he would die, but also much about the quality of the life he would live, the humility, the approachability of the Savior. Jesus was the friend of sin, as we see that here. He was born in a cave. He was born in a cattle stall, not in a palace, not in an exclusive private ward of some expensive hospital in Jerusalem. He was born in a cattle stall, and the shepherds came to him immediately. Ordinary people were drawn to him. He was born in a cave. Throughout his life we see his best friends are just rural folk. They're fishermen. They're tax collectors, lepers, the kind of people that no one would go near. They came to him and he reached down and he touched them and he healed them. That's the kind of Savior he was. Even though he was the King of heaven, the high King of heaven, he came down to earth and he wasn't ashamed to mix with the likes of you and me.

You know, we had a Prime Minister in my country many years ago, William Gladstone, and there was a time when there was a street sweeper who was working around the House of Parliament, around the area, and he was really only known to the people who moved around that part of town every day. But then the street sweeper suddenly disappeared and people wondered they hadn't seen him around, wonder what happened to him. So there's a Christian worker who worked in the city and he tried to track him down and eventually he managed to figure out where he lived and went to his little flat, apartment, and there it

was a very small place with just the barest of necessities, and there was a street sweeper, and he'd been very sick, and he hadn't been able to go to work for a number of days. And so the Christian worker asked him if he was okay and he said, "Yeah." I mean, do you get lonely here? Does anyone ever come and visit you here? And he said, "Oh yes, Mr. Gladstone came." What, you mean the Mr. Gladstone? "Oh yeah, yeah, he came. He sat there on that stool over there and he read the Bible to me."

Well, Jesus was like that. Jesus was a friend to sinners and the poor and needy were drawn to him like a magnet. They still are, aren't they? I mean, think about it, think about it today. I mean, where is the kingdom of Christ making its greatest advances? Generally speaking, it's not in Beverly Hills. It's not. It's not in Fifth Avenue, Manhattan. Mayfair, Bloomsbury in London. It isn't those kind of places. Today Jesus is building his church in places like Africa and Asia amongst the poor and needy. They're still drawn to him today, aren't they? We read about this, don't we? Our prayer list on a Wednesday night, we read of Keith Underhill and Murungi going to the shanty towns in Nairobi. Brian Ellis working in the slums in Manila. Samuel Beauprey working with the poorest of the poor there in India. The Dalits. Now I've had the privilege of seeing this. In fact, I can think about one Christmas time a couple of years ago and Samuel took me out into a remote area in rural Andhra Pradesh to a Dalits community, and apparently some years before a Baptist missionary had been there to present the gospel to these people. And you know, they have the caste system there, the Brahmin and the Dalits, and the Brahmin, that's the upper cast of the Hindus, they wanted nothing to do with this. They weren't interested in the gospel at all. They saw that as beneath them. But the Dalits, when they heard about this Savior, they were immediately drawn to this and many, many of them were converted. There's a church now over there. It's a little ramshackle building. I went there once Saturday night. It was Christmas time and it's all pitch black outside and they had these little lanterns inside, and the men sit on one side and the women sit on the other, and they were singing their hearts out to the Lord. And I had the privilege of preaching the gospel to them there and I remember after the service this elderly Dalit woman, that means untouchable, that's what that word Dalit means, this woman came over to me and she thrust a 10 rupee note into my hand for the work of the Lord. And that's you, know, pennies to us but Samuel was telling me afterwards that's an awful lot of money to somebody like her because it's the same, Jesus is a friend of sinners, the common people heard him gladly. He's a humble and approachable Savior. He's not like some king who surrounds himself with a security detail to keep the masses away but he reaches out to the likes of you and me and says, "Come, come, come to Me, no matter how fallen you feel yourself to be, no matter how dirty and unclean." Jesus is a Savior for sins, he says,

"Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore,  
Jesus ready stands to save you,  
Full of pity, love, and pow'r."

That's the lesson we learn here, this scene, the birth in Bethlehem. The time of Christ's birth, the lesson in God's sovereignty. The place of Christ's birth, a lesson in Christ's humility. Thirdly, consider the response to Christ's birth, a lesson in man's depravity or

man's hostility. And I want us just for a moment, to look at that little phrase again the end of verse 7, "there was no room for them at the inn." Think about what that means, what is it we're being told here, that when Jesus, the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead, when he was born into this world, there was nowhere for him to go, there was no reception for him. There was no palace for him. There wasn't even a warm home, not even a place at a traveler's lodge.

So when Mary and Joseph came to Bethlehem, the neon "No vacancies" sign was up. "No room here," is what they found. But again, isn't that a sign of things to come? John tells us in his gospel chapter 1, verse 11, "He came to his own but His own did not receive Him." That word "own" means his own folk, his own people. He came to his own people, the Jews, even though they were trained by the prophets to look for him, and when he came they were to receive him. When he did come, they didn't. They rejected him. Throughout his ministry, was driven out of his hometown, his own family at one point disowned him, they thought he was a madman. The crowds who one time flocked to hear him, when they began to count the cost then many of them started to drift away. And the religious leaders, they hated him, they scoffed at him and eventually wanted to kill him.

That was the response to Jesus. No room for him at the beginning of his life, no room for him really throughout his life. And other commentators put it this way, when Christ first came among us, we pushed him into an outhouse, and we have done our best to keep him there ever since. That's what we do, don't we? We, generally speaking, they don't want him. They reject him. The neon "No vacancies" sign goes up over the window of our soul. "Don't want hHm. No place for hHm. Don't want Him here. Savior, why do I need a Savior? I don't want a Savior."

John Stott tells a story in one of his books when he was a student at college and he was talking to a friend, witnessing to him, and he's trying to explain to him the doctrine of justification by faith, and he's explaining to him that it's a free gift; on the basis of Christ's work, God accepts us on the basis of the merits of Jesus Christ. It's just a gift we have to accept from him. Nothing we can do. Jesus has done it all. And his friend said in a loud voice, "Horrible, horrible, horrible." Men and women today, they don't like the idea of needing a Savior. They reject it, don't they? They reject him. Up goes the "No vacancy" sign over the soul. No room here. No room for Jesus here. Even at Christmas. Even at Christmas, still no room for Christ.

I was back in England just a couple of weeks ago and helping my mother move across country to a village in Somerset, and there's a good church there and the pastor of that church, very zealous man, he was holding an evangelistic carol service. And so they would be singing carols and at the end of it would be a message, and prior to that he'd gone out into the village and he delivered, hand delivered door-to-door 700 invitations to this evangelistic carol service and do you know how many came? Not one. Not a single person came beside the members of the church. No room for Jesus still even at this time of year, still no room for Christ.

What about you? Do you have room for him? And even as Christians, we need to ask ourselves that, don't we? Do you still have room for him in amidst your busy schedule? All your emails and the calls you have to make and Facebook and Twitter and Instagram, you need to check all of those, is there still time in your morning routine for Jesus? Do you still have room for him there or is the "No vacancy" sign up? Sorry, too busy, too many things going on. I can give you somewhere at the back. I can give you five minutes at the end of the day. Well, what about in your home? In your family time and that's busy, isn't it? I mean, you've got school and you've got the runs you've got to do, and you've got to take them here, there and everywhere, and then after school schedules and all of that, is there still room for Jesus somewhere to talk to him together, to hear his word together? Or is it, "Nah, sorry, there's no room"? And in your plans for the coming year for 2018, all of those things you've got scheduled, those things you're hoping to do, is there room for Jesus there? Have you thought, have you asked him about them? Have you spread them out before him to see what he thinks about those things? Or are you just running on ahead because, "Sorry, just got no room, no time"?

That's the challenge of a verse like this. When the Son of God came into this world, men and women had no time and no place for him, and still the human heart hasn't changed, still the "No vacancy" sign goes up over the window of our lives today. No time. No time for Jesus. Is that you? Has the arrow of God's word found its mark in your heart this morning? If that is the case, then I would say to you, you need to respond, you need to change while there's time, while there's still time because one day the Lord Jesus will be coming back and he won't be coming back as a babe in a manger. He will be coming back as a victorious, all-conquering King on a white horse, the Bible says, and when he comes back, he's going to usher in his eternal kingdom, of which he will rule and reign and all those who've submitted to him, all those who've made room for him in their lives, they will dwell with him in glory for all eternity. But those who have rejected him, those who did not receive him, those who had no room for him, he will say to them, "Sorry, no room for you in My eternal kingdom. Away from Me. Depart from Me, you cursed, I never knew you."

But those who have made room, he has room for them. He says that, doesn't he? "In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you so." He's preparing a place for us now with the Father, with all the family of God together forever. And so this morning don't reject him, don't put up that "No vacancy" sign anymore, but rather receive him because, as the Bible says, "To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, to them He gave the right to become the children of God." That's why he came. The Son of God became the son of man so that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God.

Let's pray.

*Father, again, we thank You for Your great love in redemption in sending to us a Savior. Lord, we pray that You would help us if we are here this morning and throughout our lives we have made no room for Christ, we pray that by the work of Your Spirit this morning, You would help us to see our need of a Savior, to see our need of redemption,*

*and that You would help us to humble ourselves before this great and mighty King. Lord, do Your work in our hearts this morning we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*