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“IS THERE A PLACE?”
Luke 2:1-7

■ Luke 2:7: **“She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.”** A closer translation reads: **“there was for them no place in the guest-chamber.”**

“There was” “no place,” “no...room.”

The innkeeper is one of the least popular figures in the birth narratives. He is customarily portrayed as indifferent, even pitiless.

On the compassion meter he appears to fall somewhere between that jerk on the El who refuses to stand up for the pregnant lady and Ebenezer Scrooge. That’s the impression you get from Church pageants and TV specials.

Maybe the man was like that. “Your wife is about to give birth? The stable out back is good enough for Galilean scum!”

Then again, the opposite is equally possible. He might have been a tenderhearted humanitarian who ran an inn just so he could help people, and who went out of his way to give Mary and Joseph the quietest, most private spot in a village bursting at the seams with visitors.

More likely he was an average Joe who did what he could (if it wasn’t too costly or inconvenient) and was more or less compassionate (but he didn’t lose sleep over the plight of strangers). If so, he would have *preferred* to give them a room but none were available, and that was that.

All this is speculation, and it really does not make a difference. What matters is that **“there was” “no place,” “there was no... room.”**

It was hardly the last time. The way Jesus was crowded out at his birth foreshadowed the dislocation that dogged him over the course of his public life.

☹ 1st, **“There was no” physical “room”** for Messiah. The Son of God had **“no place”** to call his own: he was literally homeless for the duration of his ministry.

{Mt 8:19-20} When a man **“came to him and said, ‘I will follow you wherever you go,’ Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have their holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’”**

{Mt 27:59-60} The Son of Man was homeless even in death. After his crucifixion Joseph of Arimathea **“took the body... and placed it in his own new tomb.”** The reason Jesus was buried in another man’s grave was that he did not have one of his own.

{Jn 1:3; 10} **“Through [Christ] all things were made.”** He gave us the Earth as our home. Yet **“though the world was made through him” “there was” “no place”** for him in it. He was homeless.

☺ {2 Co 8:9} He endured this **“for [our] sake”!** It was for us he left the splendor of heaven and became homeless, **“so that through his”** homelessness we might dwell in glory!

★ Hear the Word of the Lord in John 14:2-3: **“My Father’s house has plenty of room; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to**

prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

☹ 2nd, **“There was”** little or **“no”** social **“room”** for Messiah. More often than not, the Son of God had **“no place”** in the community.

{Lk 4:16-30} Consider the infamous incident in Nazareth. One Sabbath **“he went into the synagogue... as was his custom.”** He read Isaiah 61:1-2 and began to preach. Perceiving their disbelief he declared,

“You will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’ Truly I tell you... prophets are not accepted in their hometowns....” the people...were furious ... They got up, drove him out... and took him to the brow of [a] hill... to throw him off the cliff. **But he walked right through the crowd...**

{Lk 4: 16; Jn 1:11} Some of them had known him his whole life. Nazareth was **“where he had been brought up.”** Yet when **“He came to that which was his own... his own did not receive him.”** He had **“no place”** among them.

☺ He endured this **“for [our] sake”!** It was for us he suffered estrangement, so that through his alienation we might be reconciled to God the Father.

★ Hear the Word of the Lord in John 6:37: **“All whom the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.”**

☹ 3rd, Much of the time **“there was no”** domestic **“room”** for Messiah. His half-siblings (the sons of Joseph

and Mary) did not grant the Son of God a **“place”** in their midst.

{Mk 3:21} Early in his ministry his family forcibly attempted to take him into custody, **“for they said, ‘He is out of his mind.’”**

{Jn 7:1-4, NLT/TNIV} **After this Jesus stayed in Galilee, going from village to village. He wanted to stay out of Judea because the... leaders there were plotting his death. But when the Festival of Tabernacles was near, [his] brothers urged him to go to Judea ... “Go where your followers can see your miracles!” they scoffed. “You can’t become a public figure if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, prove it to the world.”**

☺ {Is 53:3; Gal 6:10} He endured this **“for [our] sake”!** It was for us he **“was despised and rejected”** by his family of origin, so that through his anguish we might **“belong to the family of believers.”**

★ Hear the Word of the Lord in Romans 8:14-17:

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received ... brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

☹ 4th, Frequently **“there was no”** spiritual **“room”** for Messiah even among his followers.

{Lk 10:38-42} For example, the Lord visited Lazarus, Martha, and Mary with some regularity. *They* gave him *physical* and *social* room, and their house was probably the nearest thing he had to a home of his own.

Still, even there he was sometimes crowded out. On one visit Mary **“sat at [his] feet listening to [him]. But Martha was distracted by [dinner] preparations.”** What did she do? She *complained*, **“Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”**

{Eph 2:10; Jas 2:26; Mt 25:14-46} Service is basic to discipleship – so basic that we should question our salvation if we have no deeds of service! For **“we are... created in Christ Jesus to do good works”** and **“faith without deeds is dead.”** Consider the parables of “The Talents” and “The Sheep and The Goats.”

At its best, service is not only a demonstration of obedience to God and αγαπη [agapē] love in action. It actually opens up more space in our lives for Messiah.

But when it becomes a matter of busyness or performance or pride, our service backfires. It shuts out Jesus even as we act in his name.

That is what happened in Luke 10. Martha’s service closed her off to the Savior. If she’d had her way, it would have pulled Mary away from him, too!

In reply he said **“Mary has chosen what is better...it will not be taken...from her.”**

☺ {Jn 15:4} He endured this **“for [our] sake”!** It was for us he suffered his disciples’ distractedness and distance, so that through his longsuffering we might **“remain in [him], as [he] also [remains] in [us].”**

★ Hear the Word of the Lord in Revelation 3:20: **“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.”**

I have been speaking in the past tense, about historic events. The Incarnation of God the Son was, in the literal sense, a unique occurrence, never to be repeated,

{Jn 1:9} But in a spiritual (yet equally real!) sense, it happens again and again: Messiah keeps **“coming into the world”** through the presence of his Holy Spirit, through the witness of his Word, through the ministry of his brothers and sisters.

Messiah comes to us before we know to look for him.

Messiah comes to us while we are resisting him.

Messiah still keeps coming after we receive him and believe in him and start following him.

The Lord keeps drawing near to us, so that we can draw near to him.

❓ Is there room for him? Is there a place for him?

The question is not whether we will celebrate his birth: it is quite possible to go all out with decorations and baking and gifts and parties and

church activities without giving Christ Jesus an inch of room. Millions do it every year.

{Jn 1:14} **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”** And Mary **“wrapped him in cloths and placed in him a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.”** **“There was for them no place in the guest-chamber.”**

? Will it be different this year? Will we make room for Jesus?

Luke 2:1-7 is the Word of the Lord.