

Sermon for Monday, December 24, 2018 - "Room for You"

Christmas Eve 2018
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Decorah, Iowa
Rev. Amy Zalk Larson

[Click here to read scripture passages for the night.](#)

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

Mary placed the baby Jesus in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

Throughout the centuries our imaginations have been sparked by that line - "there was no room for them in the inn."

We've been asked to picture Mary and Joseph dragging themselves into town waiting at the inn with bated breath for someone to bring them in from the cold. Sometimes the innkeeper shouts angrily into the night, "no room, go away!" Other times he is kind and gentle saying, "There's no room, but you can stay in the stable out back."

Scripture itself makes no mention of an innkeeper; and the word "inn" is better translated as guest room. It's most likely that in Joseph's family home the space shared with guests was the part of the house where the animals slept and ate. That's the kind of space where they ended up - where the animals slept and ate.

We can't know for sure, and don't need to. What's important to know is that there was no room for Mary and Joseph. And we know what that's like. We know what "no room for you" sounds like, what it feels like.

Our imaginations have been sparked by that line throughout the years because it resonates so deeply with our own experiences.

Sometimes it seems there is no room for us in our family, school, work place, community, church - no room to be ourselves, to let down our guard. There's pressure to contort ourselves in order to fit in, to feel at home and safe.

Sometimes we feel there is no room to welcome anyone else into our lives - just no space to deal with their quirks and issues and demands. After all, there are so many demands upon our time these days. Our lives are so very full of obligations and expectations, health concerns and financial worries, or the intense ache of loneliness. We so often feel pressed and squeezed with no room to breathe easily or rest.

These days we also regularly hear that there is no room in our country for immigrants and refugees. People fleeing for their lives are told, "No room, you are not welcome."

There was no room for Mary and Joseph, no room for the baby Jesus. A powerful man's words created upheaval for common people who had to crowd into the towns in order to be counted; there was no room for Mary, Joseph and Jesus.

And yet, Jesus came anyway. Jesus was born among us and placed in an animals' feeding trough.

Jesus didn't wait to come to us until there was a perfect place, a convenient time. He didn't say, "You'd better make room for me in your heart or I'm not showing up for you."

Jesus arrived anyway - into a crowded town, to parents who had to make do. Jesus came into our world and in this way, made space for us all.

Jesus' birth assures us that God is with us, we have a place with God. God doesn't ask us to contort ourselves in order to belong. Instead, God makes a home with us. God comes to us in Jesus and says, "I am with you. You belong to me."

Jesus' birth brings good news of great joy. We have a savior who brings us in from the cold and into the very heart of God. There is room for you and me and all people in the heart of God.

We need not be afraid - we need not live in that tight, constricted space of fear. It isn't up to us to make things good and right with all our working and worrying and to-do lists. We are not defined by our finances, our health, our status. We need not fear other people. Jesus comes to draw us all into God's heart and into God's promised future for our world.

In this promised future, there is space for all people to live in peace and harmony, knowing that we belong to God and to one another.

The good news that we are embraced in this way creates space within us - space to offer others the welcome we have received, space to live in peace with others.

Tonight, Jesus comes to you, again, no matter how cluttered your head, your heart, your life may feel. Jesus comes to you whether you feel you belong here or not. Jesus comes to bring you in from the cold.

Jesus arrives making space for you to breathe deeply and know that you are loved. Jesus arrives with the assurance that you need not be afraid; you do have room to welcome others.

So tonight, rest and breathe deeply in this space given to you. Listen to the good news the angels sing for you:

"Do not be afraid; for see —

I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

Savor all this and ponder it in your heart.

A savior is born for you this night.

Good news of great joy for you, for all people.

Thanks be to God.