

## No room in the Inn

**Luke 2:7**, “Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was **no room in the inn.**” Lets think back over two thousand years and try to imagine what the Inn may have been like.

It was probably the Innkeepers own home. He may have had a couple of extra rooms to rent out to travellers and earn some extra cash. Maybe there was space for several travellers in each room. And I doubt if there were even beds available. Probably just mats or rugs on the floor. Do you think that these mats were washed after each use, or that clean blankets provided? Probably not! Each person must have used his own cloak for warmth and a cover. My guess is that you paid for a roof over you're head, and four walls to keep out the wind and storm, and that's all! There would have been no creature comforts or privacy. Yet, God had already chosen a place for His precious Son to be born. It was all in His divine plan.

So there must be something we're not detecting here! What did God see in this stable? What was He able to rely on in such circumstances? Consider this...

We all know that animals will not eat hay that is old and dirty, so the hay must have been fresh and sweet smelling. The animals chewing, with soft contented sounds, must have been soothing to Mary as she went through labour. There was privacy and quiet. Also, the animal's breath and bodies must have warmed the area.

Joseph could have held Mary's hand and spoken quietly to her with no interruptions at the birth of her son. Then, after Jesus was born, Mary could wrap Him in the swaddling clothes she had brought and laid him quietly in the soft sweet smelling hay. She must have rested beside Him and gazed in awe at her beautiful new baby. All in the privacy of the stable. In the lyrics of the song “Mary Did You Know,” one of the verses ends with this moving statement... *“Did you know that your Baby Boy has walked where angels trod? When you kiss your little Baby you kissed the face of God?”*

This story is not meant to meet our expectations or desires about what a Christmas story must be like. Jesus did not come to meet our expectations or desires – he came to meet our needs. When Mary delivered a Baby Boy, little did she know that He would one day deliver her – and all of mankind. Jesus was destined to be Saviour King, but He came as He did to make it clear that no one and no place (however humble), was beneath His dignity, or out of His reach. And at every stage of His life He would bless and save and sanctify. In fact, the room at this inn was the very place where the *sanctification* of every man, woman and child was birthed.

John Donne, the great English cleric summed it up well when he said, “It wasn't so much that we were made like God, long before, but that God should be made like us – much more.” And the Word, took on flesh and dwelt for a while in our midst, and we have seen His glory, the glory of the only begotten Son of God. It was a strange glory, a glory in humility, a glory without royal robes, a glory without a proper bed. But nevertheless the Glory of God Himself!

The question for us today is this – do we still have the capacity to be surprised, enthralled, by this remarkable Christmas story? Do we still have the capacity to see all things new, once more? Can we approach the story like a child – eyes wide open, captivated, charmed? And most importantly, can we make room for Jesus in our homes, even when the calendar is full, and the whole family is visiting us? I certainly hope so!

Remember, Jesus travelled a very long way to dwell with you and me. “Emmanuel” – God with us! Yes, He left heaven, where the angels of God would sing to Him in awe and adoration, to be with us. Therefore, will you not reciprocate and kindly make room in your heart and in your home for Him? An old medieval Christmas poem said, *“Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, if He's not born in you, your heart is still forlorn.”* The truth is, if you allow this special Guest into your inner sanctum (your heart), even if you put Him in the very back, He will surely take over and become the centre of attention. After all, Jesus is the King of Kings, and wants to be seated on the throne in your heart!