

Introduction:

We've all read **Luke 2:7** and know Jesus was laid in a manger because there was no place found for him in the inn. When I was young, I pictured something like an ancient version of Motel 6. They just hadn't left the light on for Him. I later learned that inns of that day were not large buildings with separate rooms but rather were more like a shelter with one large room where many people would sleep. Learning that, changed my picture of what was happening in the verse. However, this week, my friend Clay Gentry taught me something that may potentially change the picture again. The word translated "inn" in **Luke 2:7** (katalyma: Strong's #2646) is not the same as the word found in **Luke 10:34-35** in the parable of the good Samaritan which speaks of an inn (pandocheion: Strong's #3829) along with an inn-keeper (pandocheus: Strong's #3830). We can be certain the inn in **Luke 10:34-35** is the common kind of inn of that day. The word in **Luke 2:7** however, is the same one found in **Mark 14:14** and **Luke 22:11**. In these passages (the only other places the term is found in the New Testament), the word is translated "guest room." It was not a picture of a common inn, but a picture of hospitality, of being welcomed into a home. The reason inns were not as common in Jesus' day as they are in ours is because folks just didn't have others stay in inns but practiced hospitality. Keep in mind that Joseph was returning to his ancestral home. This was the town of his fathers. He had family in this city, perhaps distant, but family nonetheless. One more point to note is that this is not a picture of Joseph and Mary arriving the night she gave birth as if she is in labor as she rides up to the inn door. Rather, "while they were there, the time came for her to give birth." The implication is not when they arrived but rather after they had been there some time. This gives another aspect to this picture. This is not a picture of Joseph and Mary arriving as she begins labor and everyone shuts their doors or the people of the inn wouldn't let them in. Rather, this is a picture of a couple who have been staying somewhere for some time, but now that the baby is come, no one has room in their home for them. The fact is, whether this verse is speaking of an ancient hostelry or of the multiple guest rooms that were denied them, the picture brings up the same point. When Jesus came on the scene, there was no room for Him. On the one hand, can you blame folks? Babies are messy. They are loud. They are needy. We understand that the folks of Bethlehem might say, "Get that baby out of here so the rest of us can get some sleep." What a foreshadowing this was of Jesus' life. When He was born, He had no place to stay and had to sleep out among the animals. In **Luke 9:58**, things hadn't gotten much better for Jesus. Despite being a famous teacher that people came to see from miles around, He told one would-be follower, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." In Jesus' life, He faced one rejection after another, one closed door after another. People had little room for Jesus. Granted, this wasn't always the case as **Luke 22:11** demonstrates. Some people had room for Him, but not many.

I'm sure you can already tell where I'm going with this. The concern is not really whether those ancients had room for Jesus as a baby. The question is whether or not we have room for Jesus as our Lord. In **John 15:4-11**, Jesus presents the picture of a vine and a branch abiding in each other. If we want to bear fruit to God's glory, we must allow Jesus to abide with us. Again, that produces the question do we have room for Jesus? Then there is the picture of **Galatians 2:20**. Paul's picture is one that says inside us is nothing but Jesus. We allow Jesus to crowd out everything else and we allow nothing to crowd Jesus out. He is in control. The question is do we have room for Jesus? Finally, there is the picture of **Revelation 3:20**. As John wrote to the wayward Christians of Laodicea, he presented the picture of Jesus standing at their doors and knocking. If they would just open the door, He would come in and dine with them. And so, once again, we ask. Do we have room for Jesus? And if not, how do we make room for Jesus?

Discussion:

- I. We open the door for Jesus by getting rid of our pride.
 - A. According to **Revelation 3:20**, there was no room for Jesus with the Laodiceans. He was standing outside their house, if you will, and knocking. What was keeping the door closed? Their pride. **Revelation 3:17** says, "For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing." They thought a lot of themselves. They didn't realize how miserable and wretched they really were. They didn't realize how much they needed Jesus to enter their lives. They thought they had everything under control.

- B. This gives us some major insight into making room for Jesus. We open the door for Jesus by getting rid of our pride. A healthy dose of humility is what we need, otherwise Jesus will simply stand at the door and knock. We need to see that without Jesus we are “wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked.”
- C. As **Romans 12:3** says, we must not think more of ourselves than we ought. And as **I Peter 5:6** explains, we must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. We must realize how helpless we are, humble ourselves, and open the door of our lives to Jesus.

II. We let Jesus take residence by being honest.

- A. As I was preparing this lesson, my first thought was, “Oh, we make room for Jesus by getting rid of our sins.” However, that sets up a mindset of earning Jesus’ residence. I know that doesn’t work. We are not trying to be good enough for Jesus to abide with us. Rather, Jesus must abide with us so we can be good (cf. **John 15:4**). We don’t clean house and then Jesus can take residence in us. Rather, Jesus takes residence in us and He cleans house.
- B. However, the only way this works is if we are honest—honest with ourselves and honest with God. For Jesus to truly guide us, we have to be willing to make a searching and fearless inventory of where we are messing things up, of how we have made ourselves wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked.” Honesty is at the heart of the confession found in **I John 1:8-10**. The word translated “confess” literally means “to say the same thing as.” In a spiritual sense, it means to say the same thing as God. God already knows our sins. God already knows everything about our sins. He has already spoken about them. We need to be honest, fearless, and thorough to say the same things He does about our sins. If we simply try to sweep them under the rug or shut them in the closet, we are making God a liar and the truth is not in us.
- C. **Psalms 139:23-24** drives this point home. I used to read these two verses with a lot of fear. I thought David was saying, “Search out my heart God and see that there is no grievous way in me. Look in all the nooks and crannies. Lift the rugs, check under the beds, open the closets and you’ll find that I’m 100% on the right path. Then I can be on your everlasting way.” I am afraid to make that same claim. I know my sins and struggles all too well. But then I remembered that David’s life is not different from mine. He was a sinner just like me. He wasn’t saying he was perfect and submitting himself to God’s test to prove it. Rather, he was inviting God in to search out all the problems he had so God could clean him up. This is honesty. If we are waiting until we really are perfect to invite Jesus in, it will never happen. Don’t wait until you can say, “Check the closets, look in the garage, examine the pantry, I’ve got everything in order Jesus so you can come on in and take up residence.” Rather, invite Him in right now and say, “Jesus, I’m messed up. I can’t fix it. I need you to search out all my grievous ways and purge them out of me, leading me in your everlasting way.” Honesty, not perfection, allows Jesus to take residence within us as Lord.

III. We abide with Jesus by spending time with Him.

- A. Sadly, there are numerous families who live in the same residence, but they don’t live together. It is as if they are on an in-house separation. They work different schedules and never see each other. When they are home together they spend their time doing separate things. They each have their own television set and computer and they stay busy on those things all the time. They live together, but they never spend time together. We must be careful not to do the same thing. We can easily humble ourselves inviting Jesus in, then get really honest about where we’ve gone astray, but never actually do anything about by never really spending time with God.
- B. There is a sense in which we need to have a constant connection with God. But the only way to maintain that is if we spend time with Him. We do this with family by talking with each other, eating meals together, playing games together, going places together. With God, we accomplish this by participating in spiritual disciplines that connect us to God and reveal His mind to us.
 - 1. Bible study: **Ephesians 6:11-13** reminds us that we are in a daily battle with Satan. If we want to survive the battle, we have to put on God’s armor. Notice that every aspect of that armor is connected to being in God’s word. God’s word is truth (**John 17:17**). We are trained in righteousness by God’s word (**II Timothy 3:16-17**). The gospel is found in the word of truth (**Colossians 1:5**). Faith comes by hearing the word (**Romans 10:17**). The word will

lead us to salvation (**Acts 20:32**). And the sword of the Spirit is the word of God. We need to be in the word if we want to be connected to God.

2. Prayer: **I Thessalonians 5:16-18** explains that we need to pray without ceasing. We've already talked about the armor of God. **Ephesians 6:18-20** explains that the final part of that God connecting armor is prayer. If we want to be strong in the strength of His might, we must pray consistently.
 3. Time with God's family: While we may not visibly be in the presence of God, we can spend time with those who spend time with God. When we spend time with others who are making room for Jesus in their lives, we are spending time with God. **Acts 2:46-47** explains how we do this. We need to spend time together as a congregation, assembly to glorify God and edify one another. Additionally, we must spend time together outside the assemblies because we are members of this congregation.
- C. We need to understand that these are not mere checklist items. Let's not ask silly questions like "How much studying, praying, and time with the saints must I have to go to heaven?" If that is our approach, we'll never make it. This is an issue of survival. The issue is not what is the minimum requirement, the issue is without these things Jesus is not living in us. I don't care how many checklist items you think you are accomplishing in your own personal righteousness. If you are not doing these things that connect you to God and to Jesus, you are not going to make it. We abide with Jesus by spending time with Him.

IV. We put Jesus in charge by listening to what He says.

- A. Having said all the above, we need to understand that we are not merely trying to make room for Jesus to be close to us, near us, or with us. We are making room for Jesus to be in charge of us. We don't just want Him sitting in the car, we need Him in the driver's seat. He is not a servant in the house, He is the manager of our house. He is not a steward or even a co-pilot on the plane, He is the pilot, setting the course, plotting the way, and leading us home.
- B. There are plenty of people who are humble, knowing what a rotten job they've done with their own lives and invited Jesus in to clean things up. There are plenty of people who spend time praying, studying, and meeting with other Christians. Sadly, there are far fewer Christians who actually let any of this truly impact their lives. Oh, don't get me wrong. These Christians can answer all kinds of doctrinal questions. If the church sets a toe out of the pattern line, they'll be right there complaining to the elders, harping on the preacher, or even going to another congregation. But Jesus is not really impacting them. They are filled with arrogance, as they believe they have all the answers for everyone else's problems. They pursue unethical business deals. They are cutthroat on the job. They rage in their homes. They lust and lie. They know Jesus' truth but have become experts as to why they are exceptions to what Jesus has said.
- C. However, we are only making room for Jesus to be in charge by actually listening to Him. It is not enough to simply call Jesus, Lord, we actually have to do what the Father says (**Matthew 7:21-23**). In **Luke 6:46**, Jesus said, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" We've only made room for Jesus to be in charge when we do what we discover through study, prayer, and time with God's children. If we continue to just do what we think is best, then we are still being the lords of our own lives and there is no room for Jesus in our guest rooms.
- D. If you ever find yourself arguing against the scripture in your personal life, you are not letting Jesus be Lord. For instance, if you are saying you aren't going to talk to someone who has wronged you because it is their problem, you aren't making room for Jesus (cf. **Matthew 18:15ff**). If you are hanging on to a grudge with your spouse, you aren't making room for Jesus (cf. **Ephesians 4:26-27**). If you are taking vengeance on that co-worker who took your promotion or made you look bad, you aren't making room for Jesus (cf. **Romans 12:19**).
- E. Don't just let Jesus be a guest in your life; let Him be in control.

Conclusion:

When Jesus was born, there was no place for him in the inn or the guest rooms. As Jesus worked in His ministry, He had no place to lay His head. When Jesus offered peace and salvation, there was so little room for Him, they killed Him. The question for us is are we making room for Jesus in our lives. Are you?