

**THE GOOD, GOOD FATHER**  
Second in a Series: "No Room at the Inn" –Third Sunday of Advent  
December 17, 2017 –Galatians 4: 3-7  
The Church of the Covenant

The old spiritual goes: "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child...a long way from home..." The Lord God Almighty has special concern for three categories of people as laid out in the Old Testament –the sojourner (the person from another country who lives in our midst), the fatherless (the person who is an orphan, without parents or abandoned by their parents) and the widow (the person who may feel they have no family). It identifies in us a certain longing in the human heart that we all feel. In a way we all feel as if we are looking for home, the very place where we belong; we all feel from time to time as a sojourner "just passing through". Or we may feel orphaned and alone, isolated and without people around us who we feel really know us and care for us; we may feel at a distance from God, Father-less even where God is concerned. Or we may feel as a widow feels, with not a lot of family around, experiencing perhaps the loss of a loved one, a loss of warmth and personal connection that we used to have but no longer do. See, sojourner, orphan and widow can also describe our own human heart. It can describe where we find ourselves right before Christmas. So God sends His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into our world to adopt us, to give us a place where we belong and a sense of belonging, to raise up family and relationships, connectedness to His own great heart of love, through the child of Bethlehem. He is THE GOOD, GOOD FATHER...

When you really look at the birth narrative, the significance of the birth of the Son of God into our world, you see that He was born homeless as a sojourner. He was born in Bethlehem not Nazareth. He was placed in a manger, an animal feeding trough, because "*there was no place for them in the inn.*" *Luke 2: 7* No place for Jesus. No room in the heart. No place to lay His little head. Because He was born prior to his parents' marriage He might have been described as fatherless, or worse. He said of Himself, "Birds have nests and foxes have dens but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest His head." The Gospel of John described it this way: "*He came to his own home, and his own people received him not.*" "*The world was made through him but the world knew him not.*" (*John 1: 10-11*) Despised and rejected by the very people who should have loved and worshipped Him. Jesus is describing that very human emotion and feeling, you know, when you are surrounded by people but feel very much alone. When you may feel even abandoned by loved ones or friends. When you feel strangely emotionally disconnected from life around you and other people. Spiritually disconnected from God. Sojourner, orphan and widow, we've all been there. We've all felt that way...We've all felt there was no room in the inn for us, too.

I love meeting the young people on those mission trips to the New Testament Mission in Lacroix, Haiti. Most have at most one parent, at least present in their lives. They grow up in a culture where it is standard for parents to pretty much abandon their children at some point because they can't feed them anymore. Most of the developing world children may be abandoned in the streets as young as age 12 or 13. There's a young man, a student at the New Testament Mission School, by the name of Yves, and he resides in the L'Arch Orphanage up the road from the school. He actually two years ago had both parents, but his father had left a long time ago, and his mother couldn't afford to feed him, so she took him and left him in the orphanage...because there was no room, and no food, in the inn. I remember another scene from a mission trip to Puerto Rico where I was present when a man came with two beautiful little girls about age 12, dressed in their perfect little white dresses, and their hair all in braids. The Father was speaking to the director of the orphanage, with the two little girls present, and the director said there was no more room in the orphanage. And the Father said, "Fine. Then I'll take them to the end of your driveway and let them out of the car and abandon them." And of course, Papito, the director of the orphanage took them in. The

worst part was the little girls heard their own Father say he would just abandon them. So, back to Yves in Haiti. So he shares with me that he has no family, even though he has a family. And then two years ago his absent father passes away. And this summer his mother passes away. And now he is 17 and about to be put out of the orphanage when he turns 18; no father, no mother, no family. I keep in touch with him via Facebook and he shared with me that the birthday card I brought him (I take about 20 every trip) last February was the first birthday card he had ever received in his life. And then he shared with me that I was the only adult in his life who he felt had never abandoned him. There are reasons why we promote the Haiti Child Sponsorship program and a lot of it has to do with the fact that God has a special heart for the sojourner, the orphan and the widow. You want to know something, you don't have to go to Haiti to find a motherless child. I read with shock that right here in Washington there are 400 children in some kind of court ordered care, because their parents are abusive or drug addicts or in jail, and have effectively abandoned them. CASA needs volunteers of people who will effectively parent these children just as Yves needs people who will father and mother him. There are children all around us who need people to stand up and say "I will serve as your father. I will try to be your mother. I will not abandon you. I will not be like the rest of this hard, cruel world. There is room in my heart. There is room in my heart for the baby Jesus. I will not turn you away."

So why did Jesus Christ come? Why was He born into the world as a child? Why was there no room in the inn for Him?

Our scripture from Galatians says this: *"When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman...to redeem (us) so that we might receive adoption as sons..." (Galatians 4: 4-5)* God has sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might be adopted as sons and daughters of the Good, Good Father. We come to God the Father through Jesus the Son. He who was a sojourner came that we might always feel we have a place with the Good, Good Father. Jesus was born for us to be reborn and receive adoption as sons and daughters of God. And because we are now sons and daughters of God, God has sent the Holy Spirit, to us to enter our heart. As it says, *"And because you are sons (and daughters), God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying "Abba! Father!" (Galatians 4: 6)* We are now sons and daughters of God received by adoption as we have received Christ into our heart and the Spirit of the Living God lives in us. We are the children of God. And if sons and daughters, then heirs. We are heirs of every promise of Jesus, all of His spiritual riches, all of His blessing and favor, ours. Heirs of the GRACE OF GOD, we are. The Son of God was born in Bethlehem that we might be re-born children of God by adoption today.

So whatever is broken, whatever feels at a distance from God; whatever in us feels isolated and alone; whatever feels father-less and rootless and without a home, whatever feels empty and without emotion or love, whatever feels frustrated and angry and set apart, bring it to inn of the Father's heart in Bethlehem this Christmas. Bring it to the Christ Child. Sometimes I feel like a motherless child, a long, long way from home. This is your adoption day. Once you were no people, now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy. Now you are an heir of every blessing God possesses through the birth of Jesus in the manger of your heart today. Is there room in the inn of your heart for the baby Jesus today? Can you make room in your heart for a child like Yves today? Amen and Amen.

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**IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!**