

**POSTSCRIPT FOR AN INNKEEPER**  
**Third is a Series: "No Room in the Inn"**  
**Christmas Eve December 24, 2017**  
**John 1: 9-14 & Luke 2: 1-20**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

I. Prelude:

This is a first person sermon from the perspective of the innkeeper who turned away Mary, who was great with the Christ Child, and her espoused, Joseph, on the night of Christ's birth. I'd like to set it up in this way, please. While there is no actual innkeeper mentioned in scripture there is nevertheless one of the saddest lines in all scripture mentioned in the Birth Narrative account read this evening from the Gospel of Luke. Luke records the following: *"(Mary) gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."* (Luke 2: 7) There was no room for the baby Jesus at his birth and so he was born in an animal feeding trough. I choose then to have an interplay with the line "there was no place in the inn" with the statement in the Gospel of John I just read to you wherein he writes: *"He (Jesus) came to his own home, and his own people received him not."* (John 1: 11) So this first person sermon is the rumination of the innkeeper just right after he has turned away Mary, Joseph and the soon-to-be-born Savior of the world. The question, of course, posed to us all is this –were the Christ Child to come to us this evening would WE receive HIM or turn Him away? Let us listen in now to the innkeeper as he stands outside his inn, on that fateful night when he has just sent the Holy Family away...

II. Ruminations of an Innkeeper:

I really hope I did the right thing. That couple who came here looked so sad and needy. The husband was forlorn and desperate. The young woman obviously great with child. Even so, there was a certain radiance about her, even a certain peace. When I told them that the inn was full they were not angry, they didn't try to persuade me, nor bribe me. They just walked away out into the chill night air out into an open field, out into the starry night. What a night it is this evening! The sky is so clear and crisp and filled with light. Not a cloud to be seen. It is as if all the firmament of heaven has pitched a tent over the sky of Bethlehem. There I see it – Orion and his belt. Look there --the sign of the lion constellation, symbolizing Judah and its kings, rising in the East. Is it just me or is the sky brighter this evening, all of creation on tip toes and in expectancy about something? Starry, starry night!

I am so tired. I feel I could fall asleep standing up. I have never been busier with this holiday and census from the Syrian governor all coming together at the same time. Everyone needs a room. Everyone is clamoring for a place to stay. It seems like all of Judah is traveling from somewhere else. That couple had a distinct accent of being from Galilee. Galileans traveling all the way to Bethlehem. They sure didn't look like they were from the City of David or had anything to do with a king. Just threadbare, unimpressive sojourners far away from home and without so much as a piece of straw on which to lay their heads. Too bad, that...But tonight I am too tired and too busy to care very much. My busy-ness and filling my hours with too many

things have robbed me of an ability to care about anything, let alone some poor family from Galilee...

But I sure hope I did the right thing by that little family. This Roman-ordered census certainly has been good for business. I have booked and double booked and triple booked every room in my inn. Even the stable is full. There's no place even there. I'm a good person. I'm only doubling the costs of my meals; some of my fellow innkeepers are really gouging people. I stand to make quite a profit; my purse is full of shekels. How pleased I am; how self-sufficient! O my Soul, how good and blessed you are! I did this by the work of my own hands. O, to be sure, I'll have to make an extra contribution to the Temple this year in thanks. I'm a good and religious person. So perhaps the Romans will order people to do something else that will line my pockets next year. But no amount of money could find a place for that poor couple. But they didn't have much money anyway...Too bad. How sad. It made me feel sorry when I had to say to them –“No, there is no room in the inn for you and by the way there is no room in Bethlehem for you tonight.” Didn't like saying that, but I can't help and feed every poor couple from Nazareth now, can I? Pretty soon every sad story in Israel would be lining up outside my inn for charity.

I really hope I did the right thing tonight. Why can't I get them out of my head? The great irony was I turned them away without so much as a crust of bread. Bethlehem, “Town of Bread”, but there is no crum, no bread of life for them. The young woman, I think her name was Miriam, but I forget, not very significant nor memorable, she looked as if her time to deliver her child was soon. I think that was the hardest part of turning them away. Why is this bothering me so? What's going to happen to their newborn baby? Who will watch over it? Who will make sure the infant is safe? Why do I keep thinking of them? I'm just so tired. I just feel so empty. That's someone else's responsibility not mine. I should be feeling better than I do. I should be happier and more self-satisfied with everything I have and everything I have made this night. You know, sometimes it feels as if you have missed your moment. Something has come and gone and you missed it. God is shouting at you but your ears are stuffed shut. I keep having this nagging feeling that I missed an important appointment, I missed out on something wonderful and special, and I wish there was some way to do it all over again. Some way, perhaps, to dial it back and relive my life again...

Look, just look up into the sky. See the starry host. Everything seems to be swirling around Bethlehem. Everything so clear; every star so vibrant and distinct. The night sky seems to be alive. There, I almost felt as if I were brushed by something, light and gossamer thin, almost like an angel wing. Why are those shepherds making such a commotion? Maybe, I should have made room in my inn for that couple. Well, tomorrow is another day...and I am weary and have much to do...

### III. Postscript for an Innkeeper:

There was a young woman in the checkout line at Giant Eagle with a little baby held at her waist. I was right behind her in line. The young woman looked tired and stressed. The baby, fidgety and unhelpful. As the check out person scanned the items in her shopping cart the

young woman intently watched the totals. At one point she began removing items from her cart. Normally, I don't see such things. I try to keep focused on the task of getting in and out of Giant Eagle as quickly as possible. Because right before Christmas I am way too busy with way too many things. As I watched I felt nudged to do something about it. What to do? What is the right thing to do? So I prayed to the Lord, "Lord, what is the right thing to do?" **"Lord, you give me a sign."** And I remembered the story of the birth of Jesus. And I said to the checkout person, "I will pay for every item the young woman cannot pay for herself. And here is my ham, add it to her shopping cart, and I will pay for it, too." And suddenly, I heard the little tinkling of the bell from the Salvation Army bellringer outside the store, and I would swear I heard a little baby cry in the distance, and this "shepherd made haste" and when I went out to get into my car in the parking lot, I looked up into the night sky and the stars shown a little more brightly, and I do believe Jesus was again born in Bethlehem.

*"And this shall be a sign unto you, you will find the babe, wrapped in swaddling cloths, and lying in a manger, for there was no place for them in the inn." (Luke 2: 7 & 12)*

Lord, thank you that there is room in the inn of my heart for the baby Jesus tonight. Maybe, just maybe, there is a place for HIM in your heart as well. Amen and Amen.

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