

December 24, 2016
Luke 2:1-20

There was no place for them in the inn in Bethlehem. There was no place for Mary and Joseph, though they had been on the road from Galilee for days and days. They were tired and weary. And Mary was very pregnant. And the contractions had started. And the baby was coming. And this was not at all what they had planned. It was not how their son, God's son, should come into the world. But there was no place for them in the inn.

There was no place for them there or anywhere in the great Roman empire. There was no place for them with its Emperor Augustus and the great marble halls of the Senate. There was no place for them with the illustrious governor Quirinius or any of the powerful and politically connected who served Rome. There was no place for them in all the intrigue and empire-making and endless military conquest. There was no place there for Mary and Joseph and the Christ child.

There was no place for them in Jerusalem either. There was no place within God's holy temple or its sacred courts. There was no place in the

city of the religious and the pious and the scholarly. No place in Jerusalem among the priestly and professional, waiting and watching for God. Of all places, there should have been a place there. But there was no place in Jerusalem for Mary and Joseph and the Christ child.

There was no place for them in Bethlehem either. In the city of David, among Joseph's own kin. You'd think there would have been a place there. But there was no place for them among their own people and their own kind. No place among the normally decent and regularly hospitable. Not in anyone's home, or anyone's schedule, not in all the hustle and bustle of life. Not even at the inn in Bethlehem. There was no place for Mary and Joseph and the Christ child.

There was no place for this family. No place for this baby. No place for God to enter into our world, for the Word to become flesh and dwell among us. No place anywhere but a manger in a cattle stall.

In all the world, there was no place for the Son of God but a manger.

There was nowhere but that nowhere place. Because in this world of the powerful and the important; the pious and the prestigious, the careful and the comfortable, often that is the only place left for God. It is the

only place where there IS a place for the Christ child. The nowhere, the leftover, the not important place. The place that we are sure that God could not be.

But all the Christ child needs is just such a place. A place. Any place. It doesn't have to be fancy. It doesn't have to be perfect. It doesn't have to be scrubbed and polished and baby-proofed. All it has to be is a place. Because wherever there is a place, wherever there is space; a pause, an unguarded opening, Christ comes into the world. Into the places we are sure that God is not. Into our mess. Into our stress. Into our trouble and our confusion and our imperfection. Among our company of smelly animals and feeding troughs. Among our rough and rude shepherds who hear angel voices. In the most inconvenient and humble of places—it doesn't matter—wherever there is room, Christ is born.

Wherever there is a space for heaven to break in, Christ is born and dwells among us. And he has come to the place we are tonight, to make a place for us with God. To make a place for us in his family. To make a place for us in his Kingdom. To make a place for us at this table now

and in the life hereafter. Now, in this place, in our place, in every place,
wherever there is room, Christ is born. God is with us.