

## **AWAY IN A MANGER – NO CRIB FOR A BED**

**Gary Fine – December 23, 2018**

**Luke 2:1-7**

*Luke 2:1-7 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. (2) This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. (3) And all went to be registered, each to his own town. (4) And Joseph also went up for Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and the lineage of David, (5) to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. (6) And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

### **Luther's Cradle Song**

Away in a manger, no crib for his head,

The little LORD Jesus laid down his sweet head.

The stars in the sky looked down where he lay.

The little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay.

**This is the first stanza of the song we know as “Away in a Manger.” It is also a song which has other stanzas that were contributed by several lyricists; one of whom is said to be Martin Luther, the German reformer who is said to have composed it as a lullaby which he sang to his children at bedtime. Whether or not this is true, it has become to be known in some circles as Luther’s Cradle Song.**

**This fact is true. It does paint a poetic picture of the night Jesus was born. The babe in a manger surrounded by the stars in a hay-filled stable did begin a life in a very humble setting.**

**When you think of the first Christmas manger scene, what do you picture? Many of us have a crèche in our Christmas decorations which represents the birth of Christ. There are statues of Mary and Joseph looking at the Baby Jesus in the manger (a food trough for animals) surrounded by shepherds, wise men, and live animals, such as sheep, and donkeys. Possibly cows were there too. And lights! There is a light over Jesus, a light from Jesus. It is a picture of peacefulness and serenity.**

**The truth is – it was not very peaceful. It was not exceptionally clean. It could have been noisy. And there were no wise men there that night.**

**Here is my problem in this unsettled event: the fact that the Son of God from heaven comes to earth to bring hope and salvation to mankind is born in a place where animals were kept because – why?..... Because there was no room in the inn???**

**We hear this so much and take it for granted, but, really..... does that seem right?!!!!**

**What's wrong with this picture? Why would God "allow" it? What can we learn from a manger, a stable, and a baby?**

**Here is my objective this morning. From our point of view, Jesus should NOT have been born in a stable. But he was! Therefore, rather than looking at our own viewpoint, let's look at God's perspective. This was not an accident. It was not caused by the innkeeper overbooking his facilities. There was a reason this occurred. There must be a message from God to our hearts today!**

**Again, what's wrong with this picture?**

**Honestly, Jesus, the Son of God from heaven does not belong there. He deserved to be treated better – not like a vagrant! Jesus came from heaven to earth – and ended up in a stable? Obviously, God could have done better. If You have all God’s power and could change the time, the place and the manner of your son’s birth, would you have chosen a barn? Outside? Dealing with the elements of the weather?**

**God could have done better. Let’s consider the location of Christ’s birth. It was in Bethlehem – a tiny Jewish town in an out-of-the-way village. It was possibly the least important town in all of Judah. It had a few shepherds and farmers. But it *was* famous because it was the hometown of King David. And it was Joseph’s hometown as well because he was from the lineage of David.**

**Cesar Augustus in Rome decreed that a census be taken for taxes. All Jewish males had to go back to their ancestral hometowns. Mary was in the final stages of her pregnancy. But they had to return to Bethlehem because that was where Joseph’s family originated. The journey there was long and had to be extremely difficult for her.**

**So, Augustus in Rome had decreed a census be taken for taxes. All Jewish males had to go back to their ancestral hometowns. Mary was late in her pregnancy, and the journey to Bethlehem was incredibly strenuous, especially having to ride on a donkey for many miles. The timing of this could not have been worse for them! All that was happening might have seemed to be by chance, but it was actually the hand of God moving through history to accomplish his purpose!**

*Micah 5:2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is told from old, from ancient days.*

**God foretold the birth of Christ 400 years before He was born, and stated His birth would be in Bethlehem! My thought is.....**

**Why didn't God choose a woman from Bethlehem to give birth? This would have been much less complicated. In a journey to Bethlehem, something could go wrong! But the point is this:**

**God overlooks the things that are convenient, the easy or the obvious, to birth His plans and to accomplish His purposes.**

**"If God ordains it, He will make a way!" (unknown)**

**There was no room in the Inn. Was this like the Holiday Inn? Or maybe a Motel 6? No. Historical records in all of the Roman Empire did not have a place called an inn as we know it. Most inns provided a place to rest – a building for recuperation and safety. There were no hot tubs or continental breakfasts. They were just rooms to rest from the dirty, difficult, and dangerous traveling experiences.**

**In the Greek language, there are two different words for the word "inn" with two different meanings. In Luke 10:34, the Good Samaritan took the injured person he rescued to a small building dedicated to serving travelers. Often these were buildings that housed people on one floor with food, fire, and a place to rest, and then a place in the back for animals to be kept.**

**Today there is a place in Jericho called The Inn of the Good Samaritan. Inn now means guest room. Animals are kept elsewhere, possibly in a cave on a hillside.**

**But why were Mary and Joseph turned away? The innkeeper said they were full. Did that mean they were full of guests? Or was it that because Mary was pregnant, her delivery might upset the guests? The bottom line is, they were turned away. This leads us back to the point that nothing in this picture looks right. Jesus deserves better than this. God could have done better. So that brings us to the next question;**

**Why did God allow this? We must believe that God wanted it this way! He must have ordained it. He had a purpose for Jesus to be born this way. The inn was full because that is the way God wanted it to be!**

**Charles Spurgeon answered this question in his sermon, “No Room for Christ in the Inn.” First of all, Christ was born this way to show his HUMILIATION. Would it have been fitting that the man who was to die naked on the cross be robed in purple at his birth? No! In his birth, early life, ministry, and even in his death, Christ lived in humility having not much more than a peasant.**

*Acts 8:33 In his humiliation judgement was taken away.*

### **King of the Poor**

*2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our LORD, that though He was rich for our sakes, He became poor, that through his poverty, we might become rich.*

**Rich: eternity, infinity, omnipotent, omniscience, heaven, earth, domain over all.**

**Poor: born, trade, no home to lay his head on, no other support, no inheritance. His humble birth was referred to in Psalm 41 and Zechariah 9.**

**Finally, Jesus was born this way in order that the humble might feel invited to come to Him. It was an invitation to the humble.....**

***We might tremble to approach a throne, but we cannot fear to approach a manger.***

***Don't miss this: the manner of his birth, born in a stable, was an invitation to the rejected, the overlooked, the mistreated, the outsiders, and the poor.***

**But here is an inspiring thought: The fact that there was no room in the inn, that he was born in a stable, and placed in a manger turns out to be so much more than an incidental story of happenstances.**

**It is central to who Jesus is. Now we can say He HAD to be born this way. It couldn't have happened any other way.**

*Philippians 2:7 He emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*

**Nothing appeared supernatural about Jesus birth. No haloes, no angels singing, no voices from heaven in the stable. Outwardly, Mary and Joseph were simply a poor young couple. Yet, all of it, every single part of it, every random detail, was planned by the Father before the foundation of the world. God's fingerprints were all over this and are apparent to those who seek him.**

**What do we learn about this?**

**1. God uses difficult and hidden circumstances that often make no sense at the time in order to accomplish His purposes in the future. In the last two (2) Sundays we have learned that Mary and Joseph had no idea what was before them; the birth scene and that which seemed negative was to be interpreted as a part of God's plan. God really knew what He was doing. Nothing is/was wasted. Closed doors don't stop God's plans.**

**2. The world had no room for Christ, and it has no room for Christ now.**

*John 1:11 He came into that which was his own, but the world did not receive him.*

**Even the stars pointed to his coming but still, there was no room in the inn.**

***\* Today, scriptures point to Jesus death and resurrection. He is coming again and still our world has no room for Him.\* He is still an outsider.***

***3. The followers of Jesus share the same fate. The text did not say “no room for Him, but no room for them!***

***Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny himself and take up their cross and follow me.***

**Will you make room for Jesus in your heart? We have the same picture – Jesus standing outside knocking to enter. \*Make your heart be a Bethlehem stable.\***