

N U R T U R E  
F A I T H  
with  
Dr. W. Douglas Hood, Jr.

December 24, 2016

No Place Available

*“She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.”*

Luke 2:7 (Common English Bible)

No single incident in Jesus’ life captures more powerfully, and clearly, his reception here on earth: *“there was no place for them.”* In only moments prior to his birth, the words were spoken, “no place.” In his life, there would be no place in people’s hearts for a meaningful relationship with him. During his ministry, there would be no place for his teachings in the minds of those who heard him. In the synagogue, there would be no place for his prophetic message. As Harry Emerson Fosdick once observed, “inhospitality was the central tragedy of Jesus’ life.”<sup>1</sup>

Today, this remains a difficulty for Jesus, finding a place in our lives. It has been suggested that atheism – the denial of God’s existence – is not the major enemy of Christianity. The major enemy of the Christian faith is the inhospitality of those who will say that they believe in Jesus. Belief is important. It is the beginning place of a vital, life-giving faith. But belief without hospitality, belief without making a place for Jesus in one’s life, results in the suffocation of faith. Faith is nourished and grows in strength by an ongoing, daily relationship with Jesus. Neglect any relationship, fail to make a place for those who love you, and the consequence is the loss of that relationship.

Some will say that the difficulty is simply overcrowded lives. We have become increasingly busy and there is little “place in our life” left over at the end of the day. Few will question how busy we have become. That would be difficult to debate. The question that presses is, “Busy doing what?” What occupies the place of those hours that we are awake? We find places for the things we really care about. We may say that there is no place for Jesus in our life today. And then we say the same thing tomorrow. We then discover that weeks have passed without any meaningful time with God and God’s Word in the Bible. What is inescapable is that we gave our time to matters for which we cared more deeply than Jesus.

Tonight is Christmas Eve. What we recall tonight is the birth of the Christ child. Most people know that, believers and unbelievers. But there is something else that happens on this night, something that we would do well not to forget. For the first time, the words, *“there is no place”* is spoken. There is no place in the guestroom for the family of Jesus Christ; no place for Jesus to be born. Someone once wisely said, “You can’t un-ring the bell.” Well, there is nothing we can do about those words spoken so long ago, *“there is no place.”* But tonight, as we remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus, we can answer for ourselves, “Will there be a place for Jesus in our life?”

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<sup>1</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick, *“Hospitality to the Highest”*, **Riverside Sermons** (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 275.