

December 4, 2016

Luke 2:1-7

“No Room For Jesus”

Pastor Wayne Puls, Senior Pastor at Hope Lutheran Church

On a chilly, dark, winter night, many hundreds of years ago, a child was born. This baby arrived in the usual way; but back then there were no hospitals, no neo-natal units, no doctors and nurses specializing in obstetrics. Most babies back then were born in warm, comfortable homes, were welcomed by families and relatives, and were cradled in snug little beds or cribs. But not this particular baby.

His parents were in a bind. They were travelers, out-of-towners, spending the night in an unfamiliar town. A crowded town it was, overflowing with visitors from all over the countryside. Every lodging room booked. Every bed taken. Every house full.

No room for this weary, worn-out couple. Except in a stable. They had to settle for an animal shelter. They were sleeping in a barn. Sleeping, until the contractions started, until the birthpains took over. And soon, in this most unusual, most inappropriate venue – in a stable – their child was born.

No room in Bethlehem for mother Mary, for father Joseph, for baby Jesus. No room for Jesus.

What was wrong with those Bethlehemites, we wonder? How could they not make room for the holy family? How dare they disregard Mary and Joseph, and deny sweet little baby Jesus? How frozen must their hearts be that they could fall asleep under their cozy, warm blankets, while a baby – an incredibly important, significant baby – had to be born in a cold, drafty, smelly stable?

Good Christians like us are offended by people like the Bethlehemites. They refused to welcome Jesus! How can that be?

“No room for Jesus” is part of our Bible story for today. I can’t help but wonder, though. Is it part of your family’s story these days, too? Part of your own personal story, perhaps? Or are you making room for Jesus, in your home, in your daily life, in your heart?

Now, if Joseph and Mary strolled into our church today, and they asked, “Could anyone help us out? Does anyone have a room to spare tonight?” we would all jump to say “Yes! Of course we will! We’ll definitely make room! We’ll make our kids sleep in the garage, or we’ll make our in-laws sleep on the couch!” I’d make room for them. Wouldn’t you?

But are we making room for Jesus? He’s not a little baby anymore. He doesn’t just want a bed to sleep in. He’s our Savior. Jesus is the Ruler of the universe. He’s the Prince of heaven. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. And one day soon Jesus will come again from heaven, and every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! We’ll all make room for him on that day!

But what about on this day? Well, we’re making room for Jesus in our schedules, by spending this hour in church. And that’s a good, good thing. Especially at this time of year. Especially those of you who are raising children. Being here in the church, devoting this time to worship Jesus, praising him and praying to him and proclaiming that Jesus Christ is important to us – these are beautiful things to do. We’re making room for Jesus in this church of ours today, are we not?

Twenty years ago this church of ours had its first-ever worship service. It was December 8, 1996. Pastor Wagner was there. Some of you were there. It was in a little old building a few miles from here. Not a stable. Not a barn. It was a beautiful, warm, friendly place, the Stone Chapel, where the Wake Forest Lutheran Mission got started. And it was a beautiful, warm, and friendly place mainly because Jesus was there. Our Savior promises to be present wherever two or three are gathered in his name. Jesus shared his forgiveness and offered his grace that day. Jesus promised protection and guidance. Jesus poured out his Spirit on that little group of Lutherans, and some wannabe-Lutherans, twenty years ago. They were making room for Jesus on that day.

And so are we on this day. We love this church. We love this family. We love this building, this sanctuary, this worship time, because Jesus is here. Jesus is among us. Jesus is active here, and Jesus is still at the very heart and center of who we are and what we're all about at Hope Lutheran Church.

Twenty years later, we're making room for Jesus this day.

A few days ago, we had our midweek Advent service at Hope. Wednesday, a work day, school day, busy day. But over **two hundred people** were here. Most of them were young Christians. Our 79 confirmation students went to class, and then came to church. Our 7-8 grade youth group hung out in the Youth Center, then came to church. There were youth and kids and children all over the pews.

Pastor Lineberger preached. He shared a beautiful sermon about Mary, and her song of rejoicing. It struck me, as I was sitting out there in the pews, with all of those kids in church,

how quiet and attentive they all were. You could have heard a pin drop throughout the whole sermon.

It made my heart glad to realize how there are so many families here in our church, so many church members, who are making room for Jesus. Keep coming to church. Keep giving Jesus your worship. Keep coming to Bible study, and confirmation, and Sunday School, and Wednesday Night Alive, and youth group, and small group, and FLASH, and Kingdom Kids, and Kids Connect, and Little Blessings, and Xplore Trackout, and Hope Lutheran Preschool. Keep making room for Jesus in your life, in your family's life, in your children's lives, especially.

But not just here. Not just when you're in this warm, wonderful place. When you're out there in the cold, bitter, scary, sad world, too. In every part of your life, in every day that God gives you to live on this earth, make room for Jesus. He wants to share those cold, bitter, scary, sad places in your life. Jesus wants to walk with you this week. He wants to help you out, offer you support, give you strength, pick you up, straighten you out. Jesus has so much to offer you, every day.

How much room do you have for him?

Pray with me, please.