

Talks – No Room At The Inn

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No Room

Have you thought about the birth of Jesus and what happened? This short talk takes a quick peek at how the story of how Jesus was born is as relevant today as it ever was!

Bible

Luke 2.1-7 (NKJV) - And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The Background - what Jesus did

God created the world and he made man and woman. He said to them - I've given you this world for you to look after. But they were tempted by the devil who came along and said - you don't need God, it's all about you! Adam and Eve said, 'you're right' and rejected God who had created them and who had only good things planned for them. When they did this, they introduced death and evil into the world and lost their authority to rule the world giving it to the devil instead (see Luke 4.6). So when Jesus came, was born, lived a perfect life and then died and went back to heaven - he defeated the devil (Colossians 2.15), he 'bought back' the rights to humanity (Romans 5.8-11, Romans 5.12-19) and said to all of mankind through history, "look, all you have to do is say yes to me in your life as a free gift and you will be restored back to this perfect relationship with God." (Acts 4.12)

But people didn't all accept the message - they rejected Jesus because they were too busy, too interested in the stuff in the world around us like money, women, power and success. Others just weren't interested. Other people like the pharisees didn't want to lose their power so rejected Jesus because they saw him as a threat to their power. And this is what is happening still today! And this is what happened in Luke 2...

Talk

There are lots of people today who believe that Christmas has nothing to do with Jesus. Instead it's a time of family, a season of 'peace and love' and a time for parties and enjoying yourself. Christmas is a time about decorating your Christmas tree (and especially the outside of your house!!) And of course, Christmas is about these kinds of things but there's so much more!

The Inn

Let's read Luke 2.7 again, *"And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."*

Let's think about an inn (or bar / pub as we'd call it today). An inn is somewhere you go to spend your time and your money. People go there to socialise, to eat, to drink and often simply to get drunk. Other times people go to make business deals or perhaps find someone to sleep with or have a relationship with. An inn creates a kind of community but not a real one. It is also a place where people waste loads of money, do wrong things, are sick, are violent and abusive, where fights break out, where people are robbed and many other bad things - usually because of the alcohol or drugs.

But for many people this kind of thing is what they enjoy - they enjoy the night out, getting so wasted they can't remember what they did, meeting people to sleep with or even having a fight. They see this as a great night out because the devil has tricked them, just as he did Adam and Eve, making them think that life is really all about them, their enjoyment and basically being very selfish - doing whatever they want and leaving others to clean up the mess.

In Luke 2.7, the 'inn' is representative of the world. When Mary and Joseph took their baby (Jesus), there was no room at the inn. Yes, people were there because of a census (a count of people). But it was also symbolic... The inn was full because people didn't know about Jesus and were too busy getting on with their lives - eating, drinking and having fun.

Sidelines

The people at the inn did allow Mary and Joseph to use their 'stable' (we often say there was a stable although it's not in the Bible text because Jesus was born in a manger), the bit that was 'tacked on' to the side of the inn (sometimes inside the inn / underneath living areas).

This is like what happens around us today... Jesus gets pushed to the corner a bit, he's an addition to the rest of the Christmas message about presents, Santa and 'eating, drinking and making merry' as they say! There are some nativity scenes, there are mentions of Jesus, he figures a little bit with Christmas carols. We even had our yearly Christmas play in the centre of the city (done very well by Christians!!)

But very often Jesus is not part of Christmas. The stores and lights around houses are pictures of sleighs, reindeer and the north pole! Jesus is safely tucked up and out of the way around the corner, 'in the stable' because people don't want to make way for him. For them the main thing is the 'inn' part and not the 'stable' part.

This is happening more and more in the UK - and in the USA, where the name has been changed to say 'Happy Holidays' not 'Happy Christmas' and people have been ordered to take down nativity scenes in case they 'offend' someone. We do need to take a stand as Christians against people who hate God, but we should always do this in the right way!

We know from Ephesians 6 that we fight a battle against spiritual powers and not against people!! So we fight with 'spiritual weapons' (not with guns or fists!) Instead, our weapons are when we pray together, when we support each other, when we get to know God through the Bible and when we do things that show we are Christians. There's another powerful weapon which we have and that is thanking God and worshipping him. I've heard of lots of true stories where God has moved as Christians have worshipped. It's not a formula for 'making' God work, but if you look through the Bible you'll find that many times, worship did something to bring victory for God's people - sometimes to bring peace in hearts and sometimes to see God move powerfully!

Our Part

We need to put 'the stable' first in our lives and then gently and lovingly show and tell people that while it's good to have 'the inn' (fun and enjoyment) at Christmas, but that the real meaning is Christ - putting the 'Christ' back into 'Christmas'.

The Bible tells us in Matthew 5.14 that we are the light of the world (we reflect Jesus). That word means that we (the church) are the only light for the world./ So if we don't shine then the world doesn't get to see the light - the world has no light. So we need to shine - that means we allow God to work in and through us to bring about God's light, life and love into a dark world. So where there is darkness around us, where people have pushed Jesus out of Christmas we need to recognise that we have a responsibility. So we should say sorry to God for not being like lights and then ask him what we should do to help bring light.

Some ideas in your school, college or community...

1. If you don't have a carol service, ask your school if you can have one and volunteer to help along with other Christians.
2. If you have an end of term talent show, can you do something that shows Jesus in a positive light (for example I did a Christmas rap).
3. Maybe write a bit about Christmas / do a poem / do a rap for a school newsletter.
4. Can you talk to the head of RE about showing a DVD or something relevant about Christmas?
5. In my city, Christians put on a very high quality and live 'Nativity Play' right in the centre of town with mics, Christian actors, donkeys and animals etc. The council supports this as it's a good thing for business and tourism.
6. In a nearby town, Christians were asked to do music and carols / Christian songs during the Christmas season actually live and outside in the town.
7. Why not have a session right now where you and others throw out some ideas to show that Jesus isn't dead, he is lots of fun and relevant for today.

How else can we bring light?

Here's what 1 John 4.4-11 says (from NLT):

But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world. Those people belong to this world, so they speak from the world's viewpoint, and the world listens to them. But we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception. Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.

So our response to people who hate God is not to respond in hate, but in love. Imagine if Christians really lived in a way that reflected Jesus. Imagine if we really love God and then allow God's love in us to go out so that we love others (even those who say they are our enemies) as we love ourselves. We should help and demonstrate to people that Christmas isn't about the "I"nn (note the "I" in the word 'inn')! It isn't about being selfish and seeing what we can get, but living for others, giving is what brings life - just as Jesus gave his life so that we can live. As one clever title said, 'Have your self(less) a very merry Christmas'.