# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“Room for Jesus?”**

**Luke 2:1-20**

**December 24, 2018**

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David’s ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was now obviously pregnant. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no from for them in the inn. That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.”Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, “Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.” When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

* Luke 2:1-20

Luke’s description of Jesus’ birth sparks our imagination. In our mind’s eye we can see the little town of Bethlehem, nestled in the foothills of Judea, a town bustling with people because of the mandated census. We see Joseph and a very pregnant Mary arriving in the crowded town, weary from their 3-day trek from Nazareth. They desperately need a warm and safe place to stay where Mary can deliver her child, but there is no room. Bethlehem is busy, each person looking out for their own interests, taking care of their own needs, and no one has time for the young couple. “Sorry, no room for you.”

Shifting our attention forward a couple thousand years, we find ourselves busy as well here in the Lewis-Clark Valley. We have places to go, and friends and family to see. We have meals to prepare, gifts to wrap, and traditions to celebrate. Christmas is tomorrow, the day of Jesus’ birth. The question for you and me tonight is this: “Do we have room for Jesus?”

I’m not asking whether we have room for an event about Jesus – I’m asking whether we have room for him. Do we have room for the Jesus who comes announced by angels? Do we have room for the child born of a virgin? Do we have room for the Son of God come to earth as a human being? We live in a skeptical age where angels and virgin births and God come to earth causes people to be uncomfortable, where what we can’t explain with our minds we refuse to believe in our hearts. Is that the case with you tonight? Do you find the biblical story of Jesus hard to accept, and yet, there is something within you, some small yet real desire to know the true meaning of Christmas? Do you long to recapture some of the awe and wonder and reverence of Christmas that perhaps you felt at one point in your life but have somehow lost? Then I invite you to pray a simple Christmas prayer. “O Lord, open my mind to your wonders.” Make us like the shepherds, Lord, who pondered the wonder of it all, whose minds were stirred by the awe of their experience, who entered into the exploration of what they had been told and knelt a knee of reverence before the Savior. I invite you to enter into an exploration of faith with the prayer, “O Lord, open my mind to your wonders.”

If we have made room for Jesus in our minds, we still need to make room for him in our hearts. We need to make a personal commitment to him. When a single man or woman would like to get married, they can open their minds to the idea. They can read books about marriage and talk to their married friends about marriage and Google “marriage” on the internet. But, until they stand hand-in-hand with the one they love and pledge their life-long commitment to one another, they will have no idea what marriage really is. Having prayed, “O Lord, open my mind to your wonders,” the next step is to pray, “O Lord, open my heart to your love.”

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock,” says Jesus. “If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in.” Jesus is not like the wolf in the story of the Three Little Pigs, huffing and puffing and blowing our house down. He knocks and asks if we have room for him, room for him in our minds and room for him in our hearts.

Tonight Jesus is seeking a place in your heart. Will you say to him, “Sorry, no room,” or will you ask him to open your mind to his wonders and your heart to his love? In the next 24 hours you will receive presents and they will be yours, gifts given by people who care about you. Will you receive the gift of Christmas offered by a loving heavenly Father, the gift of his Son? “For God so loved the world that he sent his Son.” “And all who receive him, who believe in his name, become children of God.” If you receive him, he will be yours.

Let us pray. “O Lord, open our minds to your wonders and open our hearts to your love. Amen.”