# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“Room for Jesus?”**

**Luke 2:1-7**

 **December 25, 2022**

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, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

Lauri and I had been married four months when we drove from our home in Boulder, Colorado to Spokane to spend Christmas with Lauri’s parents. After a wonderful visit with her family, we were travelling back to Colorado when Lauri began to feel ill. We quickly realized that she wasn’t going to make it all the way home, and we needed a place to stay until she was well enough to travel again. The problem was that it was the middle of the night and it was the Christmas holiday. We drove through several small Utah towns looking for a motel, but there were no rooms available. I especially remember one motel – a seedy looking building with a flashing neon sign out front advertising rooms. I rang the bell for the night clerk, and a very overweight man came out in a dirty t-shirt, smoking a cigar, and sourly told me there was no room. In spite of how she was feeling, Lauri was glad to keep looking. We did eventually find a place to stay. The words from Luke’s gospel, “there was no lodging available for them,” had taken on a whole new meaning for us.

Luke’s description of the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus sparks our imagination. In our mind’s eye we can see the village of Bethlehem, nestled in the foothills of Judea, a normally sleepy little town that has become quite crowded due to the census. We picture Joseph and a very pregnant Mary arriving in the bustling town, weary from their three-day trip 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 with everyone looking out for themselves and taking care of their own needs, and no one has time for the young peasant couple. Somehow they end up in a stable and Mary can finally rest her weary body. There, she gives birth to the Son of God and lays him in a manger, a feeding trough for animals.

The people in Bethlehem miss out on the most amazing birth in human history because they are too busy with their own lives to pay attention. They have no room for Jesus. What about you and me? Are we paying attention to the true purpose of Christmas? Isn’t it interesting that God chose to send his Son to earth in a way that doesn’t require our attention? He could have come spectacularly, forcing humanity to take notice, demanding that we make room, compelling us to set aside whatever interests we may have and pay attention to the interests of God. But, he didn’t. Jesus came quietly and he waits patiently for each one of us to make room for him.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock,” says Jesus in Revelation 3:20. “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 because we have refused to let him in. He knocks and asks if we have room for him. But, just as with the inn in Bethlehem, others have arrived before him. Our lives have become crowded with many interests and pursuits, and there doesn’t seem to be room for Jesus. One of the questions that Christmas brings to each one of us is whether you and I will make room for the one who is born this day. Will Jesus find a home in our hearts?

Are we aware of all the things in our lives that are occupying our time and attention right now, all the trappings of the holiday season that cause us to be so preoccupied that we can easily miss the quiet knock of Jesus at the door of our hearts? He knows how busy we are with friends and family – he understands the worries and fears that take up space inside us – he is aware of the losses we have experienced and the sorrow we feel – and all he asks this morning is that we make room for him so he can be with us in all the ups and downs of our lives. Christmas is so much better if we make room for Jesus and include him in all we do.