



Message Discussion Guide Week of December 3, 2023

Message: Christmas: The Real Story, Part 2: Redeeming the Innkeeper

Key Scriptures: [Luke 2:4-7](#)

Preachers: Pastor Tom Parkinson

Message Highlights:

During the past 2,000 years, tradition has shaped our imaginations when we picture what happened on the first Christmas.

- Traditionally, the innkeeper has been viewed as a villain, who closed the door in the face of Joseph and Mary at just the moment when Mary was to have her baby.
- But, when we read Luke's account of the birth of Jesus, we get a different story.

Luke tells the story of Jesus' birth in a very direct and mundane way. He does not give many details. He does not tell us the time of year he was born, nor does he ever mention a place (stable, cave, etc.). Instead, Luke gives us these details:

- The birth happened "while they were there," in Bethlehem. Jesus likely wasn't born the first night when Mary and Joseph arrived.
- Jesus is called the "firstborn," an important designation that means he has the right to his father's inheritance. Even though he is not the biological son of Joseph, he has a legitimate claim to be of the house of David.
- Jesus is "wrapped in cloths," a normal practice for swaddling a baby. The detail is significant because the next time Jesus is wrapped in cloths will be when he is buried. The cloths will be left behind in the tomb on Easter Sunday as a sign that Christ is risen.
- Jesus is placed in a manger, which is a feeding trough, "because there was no guest room available."

The town of Bethlehem swelled with people for the census. That Mary placed her newborn in a manger wasn't because people were being cruel to her, it's because they had meager resources and it was the best they could do to accommodate Joseph, Mary, and Jesus.

And it was enough. Jesus doesn't need everything to be perfect to come into our lives. Any amount of space we can give will do.

Discussion Questions:

- 1.) When you close your eyes what do you picture when you imagine the first Christmas? What characters, images, and concepts are most meaningful to you? Does your imagination align with what the Bible actually says? What elements of your imagined picture don't line up with the Bible?
- 2.) If tradition doesn't align with what the Bible says, does that mean that our traditions are wrong? For example, is it wrong to have wisemen in our nativity sets with shepherds, since we know they weren't there at the same time?
- 3.) [Read Luke 2:4-7](#)
 - a. Why do you think Luke provides such a brief description of the birth of Jesus?
 - b. Why do you think Luke chooses to reveal these particular details? What is the significance of the cloths and the manger? What does it mean when it says there is no guest room available?
 - c. In what ways do you think Jesus' birth was similar to most births? In what ways is it different?
- 4.) Why do you think the tradition developed that the innkeeper is a cold-hearted villain? Do you agree with Pastor Tom's assessment that in fact the "innkeeper" (homeowner) was being the best host he could be under the circumstances?
- 5.) Why do you think we sometimes feel like we need to clean up our hearts in order to receive Jesus? What does the real story of Jesus birth teach us? Do things need to be perfect for Jesus to come in?
- 6.) What is your primary takeaway from this message?

Abundant Life Tip: Life is messy, and often complicated. Jesus doesn't need your life to be sorted out to come into your heart. When you open your life to him, whatever you have to give is enough for him to come in and stay.