

Away In a Manger - Luke 2:7

Introduction: The birth of Jesus was surrounded by many miracles. From the appearances of the angels, to the virgin birth, to the star, to the sparing of Jesus' life, the hand of God is clearly visible in the birth of Jesus into this world.

But, when I think of the birth of Jesus, one of the most intriguing statements is found in verse 7, "*And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*" That is the Scripture which inspired the carol:

*“Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head;
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.”*

That is a sweet song and sentiment, but to me, the thought of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords would come to this world and be placed in a manger is almost beyond my comprehension. Think about it, a manger is a feeding trough for animals. It wasn't a bad place for feeding sheep or cattle, but to me it certainly was no place for a baby to be placed, much less the Son of God. But, if you think about it, there are some pretty important reasons why Jesus was placed in a manger at His birth. This evening, I want to share with you some reasons Jesus was placed Away in a Manger and how these reasons apply to us. Reason #1 was because of:

1. Alienation - Vs. 7b says that Mary and Joseph wound up in an animal stall because, "*there was no room for them in the inn.*" Now to us, this would be no big deal. If we were to see a "*No Vacancy*" sign, we'd just look for another motel. Chances are, we'd have no trouble finding another room. But we can't think like Westerners when it comes to Mary and Joseph's predicament.

In ancient Palestine, an inn was a place where not only travelers stayed, but also a place where the locals would congregate for a night on the town. And in small towns like Bethlehem, the local inn would be an especially rough hangout. The destitute and the town drunk would be there. The pimp and his prostitutes would be there. The pusher and peddler would be there. The local Bethlehem Inn was not a quaint little

roadside cottage. Instead, it was more like a saloon! And during this time of the year, while the census was taking place, the inn would be filled to capacity. So there was literally, no room in the inn.

But besides that, why would Mary and Joseph even go to the inn in the first place? Vs. 3-4 says, “*And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)*” **Luke 2:3-4 (KJV)**. I mean, Bethlehem was Joseph’s home town. He had kinfolk there! Surely, he would have looked for shelter among his own people! Wasn’t there an uncle or aunt there who would have a place for their nephew and his very pregnant wife? Or maybe a cousin could have spared a bed for a night or two! You’d think his own kin would put them up for a night at least! But no! They were forced to go to the inn, as a last resort.

So, let’s not put all the blame on the innkeeper. Even Joseph’s own people were ashamed of him. Even his own kinfolk turned their backs on him because his wife was pregnant out of wedlock. His own people had no room for them in their lives.

When God came to the earth to redeem His own people, they responded with their backs turned. “*Go away!*” “*You’re not welcome here.*” “*Leave us alone. We don’t know you.*” Well, things haven’t changed much in 2,000 years! God’s creation is still alienating Him from their lives. There is still no room for Jesus in many parts of our society. The question you and I need to answer for ourselves is this: Have we made room for Jesus in our hearts? He was unwanted then, and for the most part, He still is! But there’s a second reason Jesus was placed in a manger:

2. Identification. The only use for a feeding trough was for animals to eat from. It was placed where the animals could reach it, but the only people who went there were the animal owners. When Jesus allowed Himself to be laid away in that manger, He was identifying Himself first,

A. With Those He Came to Save.

That means Jesus came to identify with:

A. Man’s Poverty - Jesus knows about our needs. **2 Cor. 8:9 (NIV)** “*For you know the grace of our Lord*

Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” He knows our poverty, and has promised to meet our need.

B. Man's Problems - He knows about our struggles - **Isaiah 53:3 (NIV)** says, *“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”* **Hebrews 4:15-16 (NIV)** says, *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”* He knows about the trials we face and He has identified Himself with them. Therefore, He is able to help us through our troubles and meet the needs of our lives.

C. Man's Priorities - When Jesus came to this world, He knew that man was basically greedy and in love with wealth and the pursuit of it. He came to teach us that there is a higher priority in life. And, that priority is the glory of the Father! He was born in that humble manger to remind men that our greatest ambition is to seek the glory of Almighty God ahead of everything else, **Mt. 6:33 (NIV)** *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

But being laid in a manger also identified Jesus

B. With Who He Came to Be.

The manger was a feeding trough – a place where food was available for the hungry animals. Jesus said in **John 6:35 (NIV)** *“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”* Just as the manna in the wilderness sustained life for those hungry wanderers, Jesus came to sustain spiritual life to the aimless wanderers trapped by their own sinful desires.

Jesus identified Himself in the manger as the bread of life. The One who could give abundant life. The manger identified Jesus with those He came to save - the poor, the outcast, and the problematic, and with who He came to be - the bread of life.

But there’s a third reason Jesus was laid in a manger:

3. Accessibility. Imagine that Jesus had been born in Herod's palace. Imagine Him having a golden crib to

sleep in, and imagine that He enjoyed a life of plenty. Imagine Him being separated from the common man by the walls and guards of a king's palace. If that were the case, would you feel as though you could come to Him at any time? Probably not! But thank God He was not born in a palace. Instead, He was born in a manger and made Himself accessible to all who would come to Him.

Luke 2 records the visit of the shepherds. These common men were able to approach Him in the manger. Later, even the wise men, these educated, wealthy men felt at home bowing before Him at the manger. Jesus could not be the Savior of all if He were not accessible to all. Jesus would be available to all who desired to come to Him. Thank God, whosoever will can find whatsoever they will ever need in Jesus. From the lowliest man to the most influential ruler, all men have a right to come to Jesus.

Conclusion: There's room at the manger for everyone this Christmas and any time during the year. Away at the manger is where you can find the answer to your problems. Away in a manger you can find nourishment for your hungry soul. Away at the manger is where you can come just as you are anytime, anyplace.