

Start at the Manger

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AM Service

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Text:

Luke 2:1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. 2: (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3: And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4: 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:) 5: To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6: And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 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. 8: And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9: And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10: And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11: For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. 12: And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 13: And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 14: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Introduction

Luke 2:7 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.

The King of kings and Lord of lords was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. When God created Adam and Eve, He put them in the Garden of Eden, a garden of Paradise and yet when His beloved Son came into this world, He was born in a dark, cold, and filthy stable and laid in a manger? **It's a staggering thought that the Lord of Glory was born among farm animals.** Why such a humble birth? Why a manger? Why a feeding trough where donkeys and horses and cattle ate. Of all the places He could have been born, why was Jesus born in a stable? **Surely, God's Son deserved to be born in a palace** and laid in a cradle of gold, lined with costly silks. But, instead, God's own Son made His appearance on earth in the lowliest of circumstances. This humble birth conveys an amazing message to each and every one of us. **I believe it teaches us the way God works and it conveys to us who Jesus is.** The babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger speaks clearly and loudly of the **Alienation** of Christ, the **Association** of Christ, and the **Accessibility** of Christ.

I - Alienation of Christ

Why a manger? What is the message of the manger? I believe the manger speaks clearly and loudly of the **alienation** of Christ. He was born an outcast.

Luke 2:7 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.**

He was born in a stable and laid in a manger not because Joseph and Mary did not seek shelter in the inn of the day, but because there was no room for them in the inn. The manger is **foretaste of the rejection** that our Lord would experience throughout His whole life and ministry on earth. The Bible says in ...

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and **the world knew him not.**
11: He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

Imagine, Christ being alienated. The Creator came to His creation and **found no place to be born.** The announcement of the day: “**No Vacancy**”. There is no place for this baby. There is no room in the inn.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper wrote, “*That Jesus was born an outcast was prophetic of the rejection He would endure throughout His entire life. Herod tried to kill Him while He was yet an infant. The chief priests and scribes knew He would be born in Bethlehem ... but the chief priests and scribes did not go to worship Him – they had no need for Him. This rejection of Jesus by the chief priests and scribes continued throughout His entire ministry. The people of Nazareth rejected Him on three different occasions. Many of His disciples left Him, after He fed the 5000 men with 5 loaves and 2 fish, but refused to be their earthly king. During the last week of His earthly life, Judas Iscariot rejected Him by betraying Him; Peter, by denying Him; the other disciples, by fleeing when He was arrested; the Jews as a whole, by passing judgment that He was worthy of death; and the world as a whole rejected Him, when Pilate sentenced Him to die by crucifixion.*”

Isaiah 53:3 **He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.**

This rejection of Jesus, therefore, is not only a sign that others rejected Him during His life, but is a sign that every man – you and I included – reject Him by nature.

After more than 2000 years have passed, things have not changed much. **There is still no room for Jesus** in our society, schools, homes, lives and hearts, and sadly, in many churches. **He was rejected then, and for the most part, He still is!** The question you and I need to answer for ourselves is this: If He comes to your town, to your home, to your heart, **do you have room for Him?** Do you have room for Jesus in your hearts? Do you have room for the very One who came so that you might have life?

II - Association of Christ

Why a manger? What is the message of the manger? I believe the manger not only speaks clearly and loudly of the **alienation** of Christ but it also speaks clearly and loudly of the **association** of Christ. When Jesus allowed Himself to be laid in that manger, **He was identifying Himself with those He came to save.** Jesus came to be born in a stable and laid in a feeding trough because He was identifying Himself with those who would come to Him and trust Him for eternal life.

Politicians like to “identify” with the right people, variety of groups, with identity groups during election time. They like to identify with important people, the right people; people who can help boost their popularity and support. **But Jesus didn’t follow the way of the world.** Jesus didn’t seek to be seen with the successful and the powerful or the popular crowd. He chose instead to identify with sinners, outcasts, the broken, the least, the last, and the lost.

The Bible says ...

2 Corinthians 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Jesus identifies with us **not by becoming rich but by becoming poor** that we might become rich through His poverty. Christ dwelt among us. He lived in our neighborhood. He identifies with our surroundings. **He came in poverty. And this He did that men might find their treasure not in earth but heaven.**

Matthew 8:20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but **the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.**

Jesus identifies with our infirmities and calamities. He knows what it’s like to face—rejection, loneliness, false accusations, ridicule, abandonment, pain, sorrow, betrayal and even temptations.

Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; **a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:** and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Isaiah 63:9a In all their affliction he was afflicted ...

Jesus’ desire to identify with us cost Him His life, cost Him suffering and cost Him comfort.

Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but **was in all points tempted like as we are**, yet without sin.

He knows about the trials and temptations 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.

Hebrews 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same ...

Hebrews 2:17 Wherefore **in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren**, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. 18: **For in that he himself hath suffered** being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Jesus was familiar with poverty and oppression. His country was occupied by a foreign power. He was acquainted with the hopelessness of human experience. He knew the ache to love a loved one to death. Jesus grieved and mourned.

He came to identify Himself with all of us who were just like Him when He came in poverty.

III - Accessibility of Christ

Why a manger? What is the message of the manger? I believe the manger not only speaks clearly and loudly of the **alienation** of Christ and the **association** of Christ but it also speaks clearly and loudly of the **accessibility** of Christ.

Imagine if Christ had been born in Herod's palace the shepherds would have not made it to Christ because **the palace would have been heavily guarded**. The **high walls** and the **iron gates** and the **palace guards** would have kept them from going in. Only the king and the queen could have seen Him. Only the prince and the princess could have seen Him and only a select few could come in and see Him.

But thank God the Lord of Glory was born in a stable that had **no high walls, no iron gates, no armed soldiers** to keep anyone from coming in. The shepherds were able to come in and find Jesus and worship Him. Later the wise men from the east came and fell down before Him and gave Him gifts.

He came to be born in a stable and laid in a manger so that the poor, lowly, despised, filthy shepherds could come and find Him. But let me tell you, He came in the way that He came **so that poor, lowly, despised, filthy sinners like you and me could find Him**.

He made Himself accessible. He swung **the door wide open** so that you and I could come in and find Him.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever believeth** in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Romans 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And **whosoever will**, let him take the water of life freely.

John 6:37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and **him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out**.

Anyone who wanted to come may come to see the baby. **The door is wide open**. Common men like the shepherds may come. The influential men like the wise men may come. The **rich** and the **poor**; the **great** and the **lowly** may come. Thank God, whosoever will, may come, from the lowliest to the greatest of man, **all men are invited to come to Jesus**. The Lord of glory **made Himself accessible** to any and all who would desire to come.

There are a lot of places that we cannot go. There are a lot of places we really are not allowed or invited to. **But anyone of us can go to the manger**. Shepherds and wise men are welcome to come. That's what the manger loudly and clearly say – **Christ and made Himself accessible to any and all who desire come**.

Closing Thoughts

As we contemplate on the message of the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes laid in a manger, **may it lead you to the cross**. Yes, start at the manger, where you will loudly and clearly hear the **alienation** of Christ, start at the manger, where you will loudly and clearly hear the **as-sociation** of Christ; start at the manger, where you will loudly and clearly hear **accessibility** of Christ but **don't stay at the manger, go to the cross**. The meaning of the manger is found only in **the suffering of the Child who was laid to rest within it**. The manger has **no particular significance apart from the cross**. Jesus was laid in a manger at Bethlehem, but that He was laid in a tomb outside of Jerusalem.

"We must celebrate this good news at Christmas as well as Easter. Enjoy the Christmas season. Sing the carols with joy, and bless others with gifts and laughter. But don't forget that it is not the manger that saves us; it is not the birth of a baby that reconciled us to God, but the death of a man who came to "save His people from their sins." Only this message that offends the world will save the world." – Erwin Lutzer

Start at the manger and then go to the cross. And **don't leave the cross until you find Christ as your Redeemer**. Don't leave the cross **until you heart burn within you for Christ**.

*Start at the Manger at the Child in the hay,
The gift of our Father in heaven, the price He would pay.
To save all His children no matter the cost,
Start at the manger then go to the Cross!*

*Imagine that you own the wealth of the world,
And all of its silver and gold!
What good will it do when tomorrow arrives,
And your hearts is empty and cold?*

Don't leave empty and cold!

*Start at the Manger, where redemption began.
When Jesus stepped down from His throne, to die as a man.
All of our riches, we will count them as lost.
If we start at the manger then go to the Cross!*

Let me close by asking this important personal question - Are you a Christian? In your life have you made room for Jesus? Or is "He still in a stable lying in a manger" so to speak in your life. **This Christ** who came to this earth and was laid in a manger **is calling you**. This is the true hope of the season. God is in our world today and He is ready through His Son to save any individual who will confess and forsake their sin and confess Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

What a great mystery that the Lord of glory chose be born in a stable and laid in a manger. **But even a greater mystery** is that **Jesus can come and be born in you** and bring His life into your sinful heart.

*O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us today.*

O, call upon Him. Believe Him who was laid in a filthy manger and laid in a borrowed tomb outside of Jerusalem only to rise the third day.

*Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

O Christians, this Christ who came to this earth and was laid in a manger deserves the best you and I have. Nothing less will ever do. Give your best to Him.

AMEN!