

Christmas 2019 SML
LK 2:1-14

- ✓ Every artist is at home in his own studio,
- ✓ every patriot is at home in his own country,
- ✓ and every man is at home in his own house.

One should therefore expect that the Creator would be at home in His own creation, and that God should be at home in the world He had made. And yet the most startling fact of human history is that when God came to earth, he was homeless. He was homeless at home. Just eleven verses into the Gospel of John and boom, “He came unto His own but His own did not receive Him.” (JN 1:11)

Mary and Joseph sought in vain for a place where He might be born, the One to whom heaven and earth belonged, but no; so when human history shall have written its last words in the scrolls of all time, the saddest line of all will be, “There was no room for Him in the inn.”

- ✓ There was room for the soldiers who bore on their breastplates the imprint of the eagles of Rome;
- ✓ there was room for the daughters of the rich merchants from the East;
- ✓ there was room for those clothed in fine purple and soft garments;

- ✓ there was room for everyone who had coins for the innkeeper.

There are many who know well the story of that first Christmas, but have never experienced its joy. The difference between the two is the difference:

- ✓ between Herod and the shepherds, and
- ✓ between the innkeeper and Mary.

One can know all about Christ, and still not have Him in his heart. Herod knew of all the ancient prophecies of the coming Messiah, and therefore he was not surprised when he heard that Christ was born. But since God was not in his heart, Herod's reaction was one of persecution.

The reason the innkeeper of Bethlehem holds such an important place in the Christmas story is because he is relived in those who refused the inn of their hearts in every Christmas since. And the reasons for their refusals are identical.

The innkeeper may have turned away the Christ Child because he was too busy with clients pouring into Bethlehem because of the census. Time was of the essence. There was money to be made. After all, Bethlehem was in the middle of nowhere on the way to nowhere.

Perhaps the appearance of this Mother, her wardrobe, or lack thereof, her luggage, or lack thereof, indicated to the innkeeper that she and her husband were of no great importance.

The bottom line is the bottom line. There would be no profit in accepting this Mother and Child. They would not be “paying guests,” because she’s pregnant, and to top it all off, she’ll be using more than her share of the water, and more than her share of the towels.

Or perhaps, the real reason of the innkeeper is that the presence of that very pregnant woman would give birth to a newborn baby whose crying in the night will drive other guests away.

There is not a person in the world who does not become at some point or other, the innkeeper of Bethlehem, because for them, that is exactly what the Christ Child always does. He drives away the other guests of the heart:

1. pride
2. greed
3. lust
4. envy
5. gluttony

6. wrath

7. and sloth

And these guests, these seven cardinal sins, are oh so welcome in the hearts of today's innkeeper. And if not these, just in the economy of time, where you spend your time is what occupies the inn of your heart.

So behind the inn, and out to the stable they went, to a crude cave where shepherds sheltered their flocks in storms. In that place of little seclusion, with manger animals as companions, at a central point between the three great civilizations of Memphis, Athens, and Rome, something happened – the only thing in the world that ever happened and mattered. That which happened was Heaven being found on earth as the Cry of God in the Cry of a Child.

For such an occurrence, the world would have searched for the Babe in some palace along the Tiber, in some gilded house of Athens. And they would have not been surprised in the least to have found the new-born King of Kings stretched out in a cradle of gold and surrounded by king and philosophers paying Him their tribute and homage. The world would not have even thought to look in a shepherd's cave.

Only a very few knew to look for God there: a handful of shepherds and three kings.

The modern world skips right over Divinity and looks for the solution to its ills in various inns:

- ✓ in the inn of modern religion,
- ✓ in the inn of the self-help book of the month,
- ✓ in the inn of new morals,
- ✓ in the inn of the latest psychology,
- ✓ in the inn of the latest science,
- ✓ in the inn of the latest money maker,

all in the name of progress. But the question still remains, “how much progress has the world really made?” Not much, not much at all, because as Divinity was not found in the first century inn, so Divinity shall not be found in the twenty-first century inns, for what is true that first Christmas is true tonight/today. The world is looking for Divinity in all the wrong places.

Suppose it was suggested to the modern world that the Divinity it seeks is to be found in Church; suppose, to all who are seeking Divinity:

- ✓ the Divine Truth it craves is the Truth that has been cradled in the Church’s teachings for the last 2000 years;

- ✓ the Divine Life it yearns for is to be found in the sacraments;
- ✓ the pardon it begs drops from the uplifted hand in the confessional;
- ✓ that only in the Church's understanding of marriage can our national fabric be preserved.

Suppose the modern world today was told that Bethlehem continued in our own day; and that by some great miracle of God's love:

- ✓ the stable is now the tabernacle;
- ✓ the manger is now the ciborium,
- ✓ the straw, the altar flowers;
- ✓ the swaddling clothes, the altar cloths,

and that the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ is living among us, not in today's "inns," but in the Tabernacle, just as really and truly in the manger.

Suppose I say that such a startling declaration was made to our day and age, and such a statement is just as true as it is startling, what would be the answer of the modern world?

It would say, "That's absurd.

- ✓ The Church is antiquated,
- ✓ it's unmodern,
- ✓ it's behind the times,

- ✓ it's ignored by all the great universities;
- ✓ its dogmas are myths;
- ✓ its morals are passe;
- ✓ its belief in the Real Presence is impossible.

Why should Our Lord ever live in a Tabernacle and be as vulnerable as bread given to whoever wants it? Why should Truth be sought in a place where the world ignores?

But isn't that the lesson taught to us by the innkeeper.

Why should Our Lord live in a stable and be as vulnerable as a newborn Baby?

Because the lesson learned by:

- ✓ Mary and Joseph,
- ✓ the shepherds
- ✓ the Three Kings,
- ✓ and possibly by the innkeeper and the other guests,

because I doubt three Kings lime lighted by a star over his yard would have escaped their notice.

Because the lesson learned is Truth, Divinity, is to be sought in a place where the world ignores.