

Homily for Christmas Eve, 2020

Luke 2:7

'A place for Jesus?'

Pastor Joshua Pfeiffer

*

INTRODUCTION – THE EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

I wonder if you've ever been caught out in a situation where you've absolutely no where to stay?

When I was young and silly,
Or should I say younger and sillier,
I ended up in that situation a few times when backpacking and what not.

I realised that until that point in my life,
I had always taken for granted the fact that I had a home,

That I had a place to sleep,
A place to be safe.

Perhaps you've been in that situation too.

A holiday which has gone horribly wrong,
and you have nowhere to stay.

Or as a teenager having had a fight with mum and dad, storming out of the house,
But then realising actually,
your options were pretty limited,
And you don't know where you are going to stay.

Maybe there's even some among us who have experienced true homelessness and life on the street.

Whether your experience of this sort of thing is small and trivial like mine,
Or at the more serious end of the spectrum,

We all know one thing,

It's not nice.

In fact it can be downright frightening to have nowhere to lay your head.

Now imagine being in that position,

And being pregnant,

Or having a wife who is pregnant.

*

THAT LITTLE TEXTUAL NOTE – NO PLACE

Well,

That's the situation we encounter on the first Christmas.

We all know that little detail that is included in the Christmas story:

'...there was no place for them in the inn.'

'... no place for them in the inn.'

Why mention that?

Is it just a historical detail?

To be sure,

In some sense,

it explains to us how busy Bethlehem was with the census,
and so explains why Mary and Joseph ended up in the stable.

But is that all it is,

Or is it more than that?

'...There was no place for them in the inn.'

I put it to you that more than a simple detail of historical interest,

This little passing comment actually makes a profound statement about the whole life and mission of Jesus Christ.

And strangely, it's part of the good news of great joy at Christmas,

Because there being no place for him,
Happened so that there would always be a place of welcome for you.

*

THE IRONY – NO ROOM FOR THE GREATEST OF GUESTS

As we celebrate this most holy night and hear again the wonderful joyful story of Christmas,

What are we celebrating?

We celebrate the mysterious and glorious truth that in this Christ-child,
In this baby Jesus,

The Almighty God comes down to us,
As one of us,
To bring salvation for us.

That's why the angel calls it good news which will bring great joy to all the people.

Our saviour is born, Christ the Lord!

This is the joy of Christmas,

And I hope and pray that once again this Christmas your heart may be filled with this heavenly angelic joy!

But the **irony** of Christmas,

Is that for this heavenly guest who deserves nothing but the most magnificent welcome and hospitality,
...there was not even a place for him in the inn.

Just think about how we usually welcome important guests.

I remember when I lived in Brisbane,
They hosted the G20 summit where world leaders came to town.

And the welcome was incredible.

Barak Obama attended that year and I especially remember the welcome for him.

They didn't just make sure there was a room for him,

They didn't even make sure there was a whole hotel for him,

They cleared out half the CBD for him!

For great and important visitors,
We extend and arrange for significant welcomes and acts of hospitality.

And yet when the creator of this universe,
Came to earth to be the saviour of the human race,

'...there was no place for them in the inn.'

There is no greater irony than this.

*

NO ROOM – THE PATTERN OF JESUS' LIFE

But it wasn't just at his birth.

This little statement that there was no place for him,
Set's the pattern of his whole life.

Very soon after Mary and Joseph left Bethlehem to go back home they had to flee to Egypt to escape the jealous King Herod.

And later as Jesus set out on his public ministry he never really had a home.

Once when a man asked to follow Jesus he responded:

"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Luke 9:58

As Jesus taught and healed and worked miracles he increasingly faced hostility,
And from who?

From his very own people,
the people of his homeland.

And that hostility ultimately developed into plots against his life,
So that he faced the ultimate rejection of all,
Being sentenced to death by crucifixion.

And even then, in his death the book of Hebrews reminds us that this happened
not in the holy city of Jerusalem,
But '*outside the gate*' (Heb 13:12).

From beginning to end,
Jesus is a man on the outside,
There's no place of **welcome** for him.

The Apostle John summed this up by saying,
'He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.' John 1:11

*

NO ROOM FOR US?

Perhaps this year you too have experienced that sense of being an unwelcome outsider for one reason or another?

Perhaps you've experienced that sense of rejection?

Like Joseph, perhaps you've had a door or two slammed in your face this year?

Sometimes it happens because of the circumstances of life or the things people do to us.

Sometimes because of the mistake and shortcomings in our own life.

At a very deep level we all experience ostracism and rejection,

Because it goes right back to the original rebellion of the human race against God.

Because in our pride we reached out to grasp what God had not given,

there was no longer a place for us in paradise.

*

NO ROOM - OUR SALVATION

Which is why this irony of there being no place in the inn for the holy family,
Is in fact at the heart of the good news.

Jesus was willing be the one without a home,
So that there would always be room in his home for you.

Jesus had the door of the inn closed to him,
So that the door of heaven might be opened to you.

Jesus was willing to be the one rejected,
So that you could be accepted by his heavenly Father.

Imagine for a moment that a great and important world leader came to Adelaide,

And like I described earlier the city was closed down and the best hotel in town reserved for him,

Then imagine he went to a sick and dirty homeless person in the parklands and offered to swap places.

He would sleep out in the cold,

So that this person could be brought in the warmth.

He would bear the suffering of the elements,
So that this person could be safe and at peace.

That sort of scenario begins to give you just the tiniest glimmer,
of what your Lord Jesus has done for you in coming to earth as human being,
And finding that *'there was no room for them in the inn'*.

That's why his birth is good news of great joy for all people,

To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,
Who is Christ the Lord.

*

DO WE HAVE ROOM FOR JESUS?

So then, there are two final questions that remain for us.

The first is this:

In his coming into this world and undergoing suffering and death for us before his resurrection,
The lord has made a place for you in his heavenly home.

So when the knock comes on the door of your heart,
Is there a place for Jesus?

He says *'Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him, and he with me'*. Rev 3:20

Do we have a place for him in our homes?
In our lives?
In our thinking?
In our hearts?

A place for Jesus?

Or are we moving too fast,
Are we too pre-occupied?
Are we too full of ourselves?
That we turn him away like the inn-keeper?

The second question is:
When the poor come knocking on our door, do we have room for them?

Because the truth that Jesus lived among us...
As homeless,
As one on the margins,
As a refugee,

Cannot but change our attitude to how we deal with these groups in our world today.

And of course, these two questions,
How we receive Jesus and how we receive the poor are intimately connected as Jesus once reminded us,

'As you did it for one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me' (Matt 25).

*

CONCLUSION

I hope and pray that as you leave this place tonight,
you all have a safe place to stay,
and somewhere to lay your head.

We should give thanks to God for that.

But even more this night we give thanks for the gift of his Son,
for whom there was no place in the inn.

Because there being no room for him,
Means there is always room with him for you.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.