

Christmas Eve – December 24, 2018
Text: Luke 2:1-14
Theme: "No Room for Jesus"

As the dessert is passed around after dinner, we hear, "Really, I haven't got room for another bite." Have you uttered those words during this season of culinary indulgence? How about tonight? Have you eaten a huge Christmas meal and you're wedged into the pew right now, feeling like, at any moment, a button might let go and cause serious injury to the worshipper in front of you? We often speak of having no room during this season. We have no room for more food. Our homes are full to the rafters with stuff and every bed is claimed by at least one person. Our driveways are overflowing with cars and finding a seat in the living room feels like an Artic exploration. We just have no more room. But what about for Jesus? Do you have room for Jesus?

Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem on the night of his birth and no one had room for them. No one. Their whole extended family lived in Bethlehem and no one had room for them. That's kind of weird I think. Of course, remember, there is no Hilton or Hyatt in those days. If you needed a place to stay, you had to rely on a guest room somewhere at a family member's home. I know it says "there was no room for him in the inn," but "inn" did not mean hotel to the people of Biblical times. "Inn" was the guest room in a private home. There were already guests in the

guestroom so Mary and Joseph had to stay in the main part of the house where, yes there were animals. Average people could not afford barns so the animals were brought into the house at night and mangers were built into the floors of homes to feed the animals. Most houses were only one room, so, I imagine having your baby in the middle of the house was not as weird to them as it is to us but as we learn from the Bible, Mary and Joseph's lives were going to be full of weird metaphors. And here is the metaphor. Just as there was no room for Jesus on the night of his birth, there really would be no room for Jesus in this world.

That's why Jesus was crucified you know. It was because he didn't fit. He caused stress by proclaiming that faith in God is about love and forgiveness. It's not about doing certain actions that earn you points with God. People wanted the Messiah to be the judge who decided who's best and who's worst. People still want Jesus to validate their life choices. But faith is not a competition. It is a gift. At your baptism, you were given Jesus and you were given faith to believe in Jesus. Now life is just about exploring that gift.

Church is a family of people who have received the gift of faith. We understand each other because we are closer than blood. It is Jesus Christ himself who runs through our veins. You know how

your brothers and sisters understand you in a way that people outside the family do not? You know the way your spouse and kids know what you're going to say before you say it? That's how family works. The Church is a family and we have all received Jesus and we recognize that not only does the world not make room for him, they don't even understand why we do. We live in that strangeness that Mary and Joseph must have felt the night of his birth. How can there be no guestroom in which we can sleep in this entire town of relatives?

That is exactly the place we live too, sort of between the cracks of the sidewalk. We have been made something different from the world, someone who does not fit into the world for just as there is no room for Jesus, there is no room for us either and that's okay.

We are square pegs in round holes but we are Jesus' square pegs. Jesus has not left us on our own. He has given us the Holy Spirit to dwell within us and give us strength to live in this foreign place that has no room for us until Jesus returns for us and takes us home. Sometimes it gets tiring. Sometimes we see how the world lives and we think it would be far simpler to do it their way. Just forget about God and pursue pleasure and power and fun. But then we come to this place on this Holy Night and we kneel at the altar of our God and receive the very body and blood of the one for

whom there was no room in this world. But there is room in us. He was not offered a place in this world so he chose to live within us and so he does until he returns and takes us to live eternally with him.