

**Christmas Eve: Being Innkeepers**

*Luke 2:1-20*

It has been a challenging two years, but we've made it to this Christmas. In this beautiful sanctuary, a time to appreciate and be thankful for the blessings that are still there, and will still come, this Christmas time and New Year.

Of course, we've not been able to have all our usual Christmas events, and one that we won't be able to do tonight is to have the children up front to participate in the service. But I wonder, just to make sure that we have all the right components for our Christmas Eve, if I can check that we do have people who have played their part in Christmas Eve services down through the years.

You might not be able to come up, but can I see if we have all the right people in the congregation, staying in their seats, who have been in nativity plays in their lives.

Are there any

Shepherds

Sheep

Oxen

Donkeys

Stars

Angels

Wise men

Camels

Josephs

Marys

Jesus

Have I missed anyone out? Oh, I know, are there any innkeepers in church tonight?

I want to tell you a story about a little boy called Donald. He was desperate to be in the church nativity play, but by the time he got round to auditioning, all the good parts were gone. He thought he might like to be a shepherd, or the Angel Gabriel, or even one of the wise men, but all those parts had gone. "Perhaps Joseph?" he thought. But that had gone too. And he wasn't twinkly enough to be the star!

He just had to be in the nativity play!

"Well", said his teacher, "there's only one part left. How would you like to be the innkeeper?"

Donald said, "I'd love to be the innkeeper!"

"Right", said his teacher, "It's a really important part. Mary, who is expecting a baby who will be Jesus, and Joseph, and the donkey, have been travelling for miles and miles, and they're tired, they're exhausted, and they've not planned ahead about where to stay. And they've come all the way from Nazareth where they lived, to Bethlehem, to be counted in the census. And you're the innkeeper, and you've got a wonderful inn. But the place is absolutely jam-packed, and you've barely room for yourself, there are so many people coming to stay in Bethlehem. So when Joseph comes knocking on the door, all tired and dusty, you've got to tell him that sadly, there is no room at the inn. Do you think you can manage that, Donald? No room at the inn."

"No room at the inn," "No room at the inn. Yes I think I can manage that, I think I can remember that."

The big day arrived for the nativity play. The shepherds put their beards on and leaned on their shepherds' crooks. The angels were fluttering. The wise men made sure they had their gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. The star was twinkly, she always was. The sheep were bleating, the cattle were lowing. The camels were, er, camming...

Mary, still expecting the baby Jesus, and the donkey, and Joseph, were so very, very tired. All that way from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Thirsty, and dusty, and looking for a place to stay. At last, they stop at the inn, and Joseph knocks on the door. Donald, the innkeeper, appears.

“Oh innkeeper,” said Joseph, “we have walked many miles, all the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem. And we’re so very tired. And my wife is expecting a baby, and could we please, please stay here in your inn tonight?”

Donald paused. Had he forgotten his line at this, his big moment? What was his line? Do you remember...?

Then a big smile broke over his face, and he opened the door wide, and he said, “Sure, come away in, there’s plenty of room, we’ll find a place!”

It’s not what he was supposed to say at all, but do you know, I rather think it was the loveliest thing that Donald said. Though it’s not what happened in the story of Jesus’ birth told in the Bible, maybe tonight, it tells us something about how we should behave and treat others in need.

I think there are times when each of us is an innkeeper who decides if there is room for Jesus. Do we shut them out, the people we don’t like, who make us uncomfortable, who need food, or something hot to drink, or a home to live in, or medical help, or good advice, or a friendly smile, or a simple hello?

And on this Christmas Eve, when Jesus comes knocking, will we decide in our lives if there is room for Him?

I think Donald got it right: , “Sure, come away in, there’s plenty of room, we’ll find a place!”

**Amen**