

The Glovier Messenger

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From the Desk of Pastor Bill

No Room in the Inn

Every year on Christmas Eve, we gather to hear the wondrous story of our Savior's birth as told by Luke (chapter 2). Many of us have heard those words so often we practically know them by heart. But when we get to the words, "she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger," we stumble over the next line: "because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke casually notes that there was no room at the inn so that when the child was born, he was laid in a manger. How horrible! Was this the best Joseph could provide for poor Mary? If Bethlehem was indeed Joseph's family home, why could he not arrange for something better?

Recently, scholars have tried to shed some light on the truth about Joseph's family's situation by investigating first-century Palestinian peasant living conditions and customs. The most important point to keep in mind is that if Joseph and his pregnant wife showed up in his family's village of origin, they would be greeted as long-lost brothers and sisters. No effort would be spared on their behalf. Kinship ties were the strongest, most important realities governing the everyday life of these peasants. To turn away visiting relatives was positively unthinkable. If Mary had shown up pregnant and alone in a strange town, the story

might have been different. But she had Joseph's name and the status of wife, making her pregnancy a positive, joyful expectation.

But still we are appalled at the testimony that there was no room at the inn. The word translated in Luke as "inn" is *katalyma* – a term used to designate a special guest chamber – often attached to a home. What seems likely then is that upon arriving in Bethlehem, Joseph sought out family with which to stay. Yet because of the Roman-ordered census that brought them there, the town was crowded with visitors and the separate guest room of this relative's house was already filled.

Most offensive to our modern ears though is that the baby Jesus when born was "laid in a manger." We see this wimpy Joseph settling his whimpering, laboring wife into a stable for the night, leaving her nowhere to put the newborn when it arrived but in a feeding trough for animals. What Kenneth Bailey, a well-known biblical scholar, points out is that Palestinian peasants kept any livestock they might own in their homes during cold nights. Not only were the animals likely to be their most valuable possessions, they also added to the home's warmth at nights. To accommodate this arrangement, Palestinian homes were often constructed with an upper level to be used by its human occupants, leaving the packed earth floor



below for the animals. Built into this floor were wooden or stone feeding troughs – mangers – with sturdy sloping sides that would serve nicely as a cradle.

What appears likely then, is that Joseph brings Mary to the home of some relatives. With their separate guest chamber already filled, the family invites Joseph and Mary to join them in their regular living quarters. There in the midst of family, and certainly with other women to attend her (for childbirth was ritually unclean for men), Mary gave birth. Once the baby was cleaned and well swaddled, he was placed in the safety of a secure manger below, enabling Mary to get some much needed rest.

Just as Joseph welcomed Mary and her child into his life, and just as he invited God’s Holy Spirit to work through all of them, so Joseph’s own relatives surely extended the hospitality of their home and their help to the young couple. Jesus’ birth is a lesson for all of us in the fine art of being gracious and hospitable to the stranger in our midst and in the strangeness of God’s ways.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

DECEMBER

- 3rd - Joy Taylor
- 9th - Jeremiah McGinnis
- 14th - Amy Fields
- 18th - Jamie Kellington
- 25th - Wanda Easton
- 30th - Don Andrews
- 30th - Tripp Ellinger

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

No Anniversaries in December



AT HOME MEMBER FOR DECEMBER

Polly Broyles

700 Rife Road, Apt. 11B, Waynesboro, VA 22980
540-949-8810

Polly would love to hear from you. Send her a card, text or give her a call. We appreciate our at home members as they support us each Sunday with their prayers and love.

*In Our Thoughts
& Prayers*

John & Jan Bottemiller	Donna Mason
Pauline & Tobi Broyles	Becky Miller
Fran & Steve Davis	Rosemary Schriver

Announcements and Upcoming Events

Advent/Christmas Bible Study with Pastor Bill continues December 4, 11, and 18 at 5:00pm in the JOY classroom. If you would like to attend via Zoom, please contact Pastor Bill at billjones@vaumc.org.

Choir Practice in December will be on Wednesdays – Dec. 4, 11, and 18 at 6:00pm. Also, there will be a cantata practice on Saturday, Dec. 21 at 10:00am.

United Methodist Men will have their Christmas Gathering at Micali’s Trattoria, 2691 Stuarts Draft Hwy. (Rt. 340), Tuesday, December 3 at 5:30pm. Come and enjoy great food and fellowship.

United Women in Faith will have a Christmas Celebration on December 10 at 5:00pm. Dinner will be served, followed by the Installation of Officers for 2025. Afterward there will be a Chinese Gift

Exchange (\$5). Contact Karen if you will be attending at 540-943-3760.

Plummer's Bible Study will have their Christmas Gathering on December 17 at 10:00am. Bring hors d'oeuvres or a snack. Kay Hanger will have the program.

Christmas Cantata will be during Sunday Morning Worship on December 22 at 10:45am.

Christmas Eve Service will be at 7:00pm. Come and celebrate the birth of our Savior.

Advent 2024 Devotional booklets, *I Believe*, written by friends of the Society of St. Andrew (SOSA), are available in the Vestibule. Pastor Bill is a regular contributor to these devotionals. Advent, the four weeks leading up to Christmas, begins on December 1st. Use the daily readings, reflections and prayers to prepare your heart for the coming of the Christ-child. Coin boxes and/or Offering Envelopes are available if you would like to set aside a small gift each day during Advent that will be used by SOSA to provide healthy food for hungry people in our country. Please return your Advent offering to the church by Sunday, Jan. 5th.

Sunday School Lesson Summaries for December

Lesson #1 - December 1, 2024

Jesus' Ancestry

Ruth 4:9-17; Luke 3:23; 31b-32

Jesus' ancestry is fascinating and not what one might expect. From Judah, a son of Jacob and Leah, the lineage filters down thru Rahab the Canaanite harlot, Ruth the Moabite, David & Bathsheba, Nathan (using Mary's lineage), skipping down to Heli and his daughter Mary, the mother of Jesus. Three items are of special interest. Rahab and her family were ultimately saved because she

helped the Hebrew spies escape captivity and was promised safety. Ruth ultimately married Boaz, Rahab's son, by way of the ancient Jewish tradition of Levirate Marriage. And while Joseph was not Jesus' earthly father, he was also descended from David & Bathsheba thru their son Solomon. This lineage also filtered down thru Jeconiah, the king whose descendants God declared would never sit on the throne of David. This proves, once again, that God's ways are not our ways.

Lesson #2 – December 8, 2024

God's Promise

2 Samuel 7:4-17

This scripture follows King David's sincere desire and expressed intent to build a house (temple) for the Lord. He felt guilty living in a palace while the Lord dwelt in a tent. The prophet, Nathan, gave his blessing to this venture adding that the Lord was with David. However, that night the Lord instructed Nathan to deliver a different message to David. David was not to build the temple. However, Solomon would build the temple and continue with God's blessings. In verse 16, God states, "And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever." RSV This is a prophetic reference to Jesus' future role. The physical kingdom was carried off to Babylon. However, the kingdom yet to come is still on track to arrive.

Lesson #3 – December 15, 2024

A Father's Prophecy

Luke 1:67-80

These words are from Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. They speak of Jesus, the coming Messiah (the anointed one), that God promised Abraham back at the dawn of Judaism. Then the focus shifts to Zechariah's newborn son and his very special role of preparing the way for Messiah

with the knowledge of salvation, the call to repentance and the forgiveness of sins made available through Jesus, the Christ, Son of the Living God.

Lesson #4 – December 22, 2024

Savior's Birth

Luke 2:1-16

This scripture is written on the hearts and instilled in the minds of all who have grown up in the Christian Church. It is almost mandated at Christmas Eve or Christmas Day services everywhere. It is considered by many to be *the Christmas Story*. Perhaps it even eclipses the night of the *Death Angel* in Egypt as the most famous night in the Bible. We don't know about the night sky back in Egypt. But we do know about the bright, starry sky over Bethlehem that night, filled with heavenly hosts and celestial music. And, just in case, we have innumerable Christmas Card covers to remind us.

Lesson #5 – December 29, 2024

David's Son

Luke 18:35-43

This scripture relates the healing of the blind man near Jericho. The title of this lesson comes from verse 39 as the crowd tried to silence this blind man as he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Their efforts were not successful, because he cried out all the more. Hearing the cries, Jesus stopped and commanded the man be brought to him. Was it something the man had said?

How did this blind man know Jesus was the "Son of David," in its New Testament meaning? Otherwise, why else would he refer to Jesus as Lord? It worked then, immediately gaining Jesus' attention. Acknowledging Jesus as our Lord and Savior continues to attract *Divine* attention today. And faith continues to heal people as well.



Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Luke 2:11-12