

## **“IN YOUR HEARTS MAKE SPEEDY ROOM”**

Rev. N. Bruce Rogers

*Reading: Luke 2:1-14*

The Christmas story, telling of the Lord's birth into the world, is one of the most familiar and beloved stories of the Word. As the Christmas season approaches, we go back once more in our minds to that little town in Judaea, to the city of David called Bethlehem. We think of the shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night, and the angel appearing to them with glory and praise to announce the good tidings of great joy, that the Savior was born. We think again of Simeon, that good and just old man in the temple at Jerusalem, recognizing with gladness the infant Lord and praising God, as he said, "for my eyes have seen Your salvation." And then there are the wise men who came from the east with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and were warned in a dream to beware of Herod and return to their own country by another way.

We remember all this and the many other things which happened in connection with the Lord's birth. But most tenderly, perhaps, we remember the Lord's birth itself, as it is told in the Gospel of Luke: how Caesar Augustus commanded that everyone in the land should be taxed, and that they should all return by families to the places where they had originally come from; how Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem then, because Joseph was descended from the great king David, whose ancestors had come from that city; and how when they got to Bethlehem, it was time for the Lord to be born; that when He was born, Mary laid Him in a manger, which is a kind of box or trough from which horses eat, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Imagine the crowds of people from all over that have come to be taxed by the Roman officials. There is probably lots of hustle and bustle, as they hurry here and there to find places to stay and to greet old friends and relatives. And there, in the midst of it all, quietly and unnoticed in some hidden corner of the city, the Lord has just been born into the world. He is wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger, because there was no more room inside any of the houses, and no room in the inn.

One thing the Lord showed us in the way He was born, was that He did not come to be an earthly king. He came as if He were an ordinary man, so that He would be followed for what He taught, rather than for any earthly power, and be loved for what He did, rather than for any earthly position. Another thing He showed us was that He is present even in the lowliest and humblest of places, among the lowliest and humblest of people. He does not keep Himself only for important people.

The Lord also showed us something about ourselves, and this is why it is said there was no room in the inn. The Heavenly Doctrine tells us that “the inn” represents (or stands for) our minds. (In fact, in the Word, all houses and buildings represent our minds.) This may seem odd at first, but when we think about it, we can see that an inn is a place where people live, and is not this true of our minds, too? Our minds are where we really live, surrounded and protected by our bodies, looking out through our eyes as if through windows. So you see, the mind is like a house, or an inn, where we stay while in this world, and that is why an inn in the Word stands for the mind.

So why did the Lord cause Himself to be born at a time when there was no room in the inn? It is easy to see now, is it not, that He was trying to show us that there was no room for Him then in people’s minds. The Heavenly Doctrine tells us that people at that time had forgotten the Lord. In their daily lives, as they hurried here and there to do this and that, they did not think about the Lord any more. Even when they might hear about Him from the Word, they paid no attention. That is why when the Lord was born there was no room for Him in the inn, because there was no room for Him in people’s minds. Instead, He was born quietly and unnoticed in some corner in the city, just as if He was not even there.

But there were some people who did notice. The shepherds were keeping watch over their flock at night when an angel appeared to them and told them about the Lord’s being born. And it is said that they came with haste to see Him. And then there were the wise men who also noticed, when they saw the Lord’s star in the east. They came, bringing precious gifts, and when they found Him, they fell down and worshiped Him. So there were some, even if only a few, who did have room in their minds for the Lord.

There is a good lesson for us in all of this. It is easy for us to become so busy in our lives, hustling and bustling about and having a good time with our friends and relatives, that we do not have any room in our minds for the Lord, so that He remains unnoticed. This can happen even at Christmas (which is the celebration of His birthday), what with hurrying around to get presents for other people and looking forward to the presents we will receive and all the good food and everything that makes Christmas such a happy time. On the other hand, we can also be like the shepherds, and pay attention when we hear the good tidings about the Lord and how He was born on earth. In our minds, even in the midst of all the excitement, we can go to find Him. And we can be like the wise men, who, realizing the importance of the Lord’s birth, came from the east to find Him. Like them, we can come to the Lord in our minds with gifts of love, and fall down before Him and worship Him.

Let us do these things. In celebrating Christmas, let us think about the Lord and be like the shepherds and the wise men. Let us have a good time, for that is what the Lord wants for us, but let us also remember why we celebrate

Christmas in the first place. Let us make sure that there will be room in the inn, that in our minds and hearts there will always be room for the Lord.

Amen.