

Miracle on Manger Street

I think it is fair to say that the “original Christmas classic” was not *Miracle on 34th Street* but *Miracle on Manger Street*. Look with me at **Luke 2:7**. We all know the scene very well: Joseph and Mary are watching baby Jesus sleep in a wooden feed trough known as a manger, the stars are twinkling in the night sky, the cattle and sheep peacefully stand nearby while shepherds and wise men pay homage. Thinking through the details you realize the setting wasn't that peaceful, the environment was anything but sterile, and the wise men never made it to the stable. The original nativity scene was much different than what is displayed on our coffee tables. Let's think through a couple of questions this morning.

I. Why did God choose this setting for His Son's birth?

1. We want to cry out, “Jesus doesn't belong here, he deserves better than being treated like a vagrant or fugitive.” Suppose you had “all power” and could choose the circumstances of your child's birth. Would it have been in a smelly barn with no heat, running water or medical assistance?
2. Caesar Augustus issued a census to tax everyone in the Roman Empire. Joseph being a descendant of David, had to make the 90 mile, seven day journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem just when Mary “happened” to be full term in her pregnancy.
3. God's sovereignty didn't just “allow” his Son to be born in a stable, he “ordained” it. The inn was full because God wanted it that way. Christ's “humiliation” (**Php 2:7**) started from the moment of His birth. Would it have been fitting for the man who would die naked on a cross to be robed in purple at his birth? We might tremble to approach a throne, but there is no fear standing before a manger.
4. The very manner of his birth is an invitation to the rejected, the forgotten, and the poor to come to him for salvation. Jesus is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. Jesus ate and drank with publicans and sinners because they were drawn to Him. The prince of glory lived like a peasant while on earth!

II. What should we learn from the details of Christ's birth?

1. *God uses adverse circumstances to accomplish his purposes.* It made no sense to Mary and Joseph that at the moment the baby was to be born there was no room for them. Regardless of their devotion, Mary and Joseph would have struggled with this negative turn of events. Sometimes God's will doesn't make sense - for years. But God knows what He is doing and will accomplish His work in us and through us.
2. *This world has no room for Christ or His followers.* **John 1:11** plainly states, “*He came to his own and His own did not receive him.*” The Jews had plenty of prophecies about the Messiah's coming. Even pagan astrologers from Persia figured it out and followed His star. (**Matt. 2:1-5**) Note that **Lk 2:7** states “*there was no room for them.*” What happened to *Him* happened to *them*. To become a Christ follower means to be rejected by the world. *The world will hate you because it hated me first.*
3. *Jesus' humble birth points to His saving mission.* John the Baptist cried, “*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.*” (**John 1:29**) He was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. Where else would a lamb be born? God's wonderful plan, and what we celebrate in the incarnation, is that Jesus became the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Have you received Him?