

MAKE ROOM FOR JESUS

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The title of this sermon is “Make Room for Jesus.”

I once heard Pastor Rick Warren Tell this story. One time he convinced his wife to go on an unplanned, spontaneous vacation. He said, “Let’s just pack up the kids, get in the car, and drive.” Zero planning. “We’ll just call it an adventure,” he said. The first night, their family of five slept in the car because there were no vacant hotels in the entire city of Durango, Colorado. The second night, they spent the night in the car again because there were no vacant rooms in the entire city of Denver. He told his wife, “How was I to know that it was national rodeo week?” The third night, they stayed in the no-tell roach motel in Dumpville, UT, where roaches were crawling on the walls. On the fourth night, they stayed in a very loud, smoky lounge in Las Vegas, waiting for the only available room to be ready for them at 1 a.m. in the morning. He said, “It was an adventure; just not a good one.”

I don’t know if you’ve ever been in the position where you couldn’t find room at a hotel, but there’s a story in the Bible about not being able to find a room. It’s part of the Christmas story.

Let’s read **Luke 2:1-7**.

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. 2 This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town.

4 Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, 5 to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Let me begin by just giving you some **background** on this passage. The story starts out with mention of **Caesar Augustus**. Augustus was the grand-nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar, and he became the emperor a few years after Julius Caesar was assassinated on March 14, 44 B.C. Augustus ruled from 31 B.C. to A.D. 14 – about twenty years of Christ’s life. Augustus Caesar was the first and greatest of all the Roman Emperors. His kingdom included the entire Mediterranean world. He ushered in the Pax Romana, a period of unprecedented stability and prosperity throughout the Mediterranean world. It was also the golden age of Roman literature and architecture. He was considered to be like a god. The Roman Senate

gave him the name “Augustus”; it means “exalted”. Caesar Augustus, also known as Octavian, the emperor of Rome, ordered a census of the entire Roman Empire.

What was the purpose of the **census**? It was to enroll people for taxes, and for military duty. The Jews were exempt from serving in the Roman military, but they were not exempt from taxes.

That meant that everyone had to go back to **the town of their ancestors**. And since Joseph’s ancestor was King David, then Joseph had to travel from Nazareth, where he lived, to Bethlehem, David’s home town. This was about 90 miles south of Nazareth, or about a three-day trip one way. To put it in perspective, it is about 86 miles from Youngsville to Lake Charles. But they had to make the journey on foot, or on the back of a donkey.

It was important that Jesus be born in **Bethlehem** because this was a fulfillment of a Messianic prophecy in **Micah 5:2** “Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah; one will come from you to be ruler over Israel for me. His origin is from antiquity, from ancient times.”

While they were in Bethlehem for the census, Mary gave birth to Jesus. She wrapped him tightly in **cloth**. In that culture they wrapped an infant’s arms and legs in long strips of cloth to help them to grow straight. They would keep these strips of cloths on for up to two months.

But because there was no guest room available, they had to stay in a **stable**; and instead of placing Jesus in a crib, she laid Him in a manger. A stable is where the animals live, and a manger is an animal feeding trough. There were two common types of stables back then. Some of them were the first story of the house. So the second floor was where the family lived, and the first floor was a stable for the animals. But most scholars believe that he was probably born in the other popular type of stable, which was a cave near the house. As early as the second century it was being said that Jesus was born in a cave stable.

We typically think that the **manger** was made out of wood, and that it was a feeding trough. But some scholars believe that the manger was made out of stone, and it was used for water. Here’s a picture of a common stone manger from that day.

But here’s **the point** that I want to focus on. **Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Son of God, the Messiah, was born in a in a stable, and placed in a manger, because there was no guest room available.** Now for me that is hard to believe. It is hard to believe that in the entire town of Bethlehem, there was no room for a woman in labor. Let me put it this way. If Joseph and Mary were Caesar Augustus and his pregnant wife, do you think the town of Bethlehem would have told them, “There’s no guest room available. We’re afraid you’re going to have to give birth in the stable”? Of course not. If the emperor of Rome needed a place to stay, the people of Bethlehem would have made room for him. They would have found room.

And if necessary, they would have stayed in the stable and given the master bedroom to Augustus. But the problem was that the people of Bethlehem did not know Mary and Joseph. They did not know that Mary was about to give birth to someone far greater than Caesar Augustus. They did not know that the most important person in the history of mankind was about to be born in their little backwoods town. They did not know that for the rest of human history, their town would be famous for one reason only – it was the birthplace of Jesus Christ. If they had known that Mary was about to give birth to the Messiah, they would have made room. But instead, they didn't make room for Jesus.

Unfortunately, many people make that mistake today. Most people today don't make room for Jesus in their lives. And what's worse is that today, people know who Jesus is. They know that Jesus the Savior of the world; the King of kings and Lord of lords; the Son of God; the Messiah. And even after knowing who Jesus is, they still don't make room for Him.

7 WAYS PEOPLE SHUT JESUS OUT

There are seven ways that people shut Jesus out, or don't make room for Him in their lives.

1. They don't make room for His deity.

Many people believe in Jesus the man, but not Jesus the Son of God. They believe in Jesus of Nazareth, the prophet, or the good moral teacher, but they don't believe in Jesus Christ as God, the creator of the universe and savior of the world. Muslims, Jews, and atheists would fall into this category.

But the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus is not just a prophet or a good teacher, He is the divine Son of God.

The Old Testament declared that Jesus was God. Old Testament prophesy said that the Messiah would not just be a man, but would be God. **Isaiah 9:6** "For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."

Jesus directly claimed to be God. **John 10:30** "I and the Father are one." How do we know that this was a claim of deity? Because the next thing that happened is that the Jews picked up rocks to stone, and when Jesus asked why, they replied that it was because He claimed to be God.

Jesus indirectly claimed to be God. Jesus claimed to do things that only God can do. For example, He claimed that He could give people eternal life. **John 10:28** "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand." The Bible says that

God is the source of life (Acts 17:24-25). He also claimed to be the judge of all mankind. **John 5:22** “The Father, in fact, judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son” But the Bible also says that God is the judge (Is 33:2).

Jesus made self-centered claims that only God would make. He claimed to be greater than the temple (Mt 12:6), greater than the prophet Jonah (Lk 11:31-32), and greater than King Solomon (Lk 11:31-32). He claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath (Lk 6:5). He claimed that the entire Old Testament was written about Him (Lk 24:27). He said that His desire was not to point people to God, but to draw all people to Himself (Jn 12:32). He said that to know Him and to see Him was to know and see God (Jn 8:19; Jn 12:45).

Jesus did things that only God could do. Not only did He do miracles that are unmatched by any prophet in the Bible, but Jesus did the unthinkable. On at least four different occasions, He allowed people to worship Him (Mt 14:33; Jn 9:38; Mt 28:17; Jn 20:28).

Jesus’s followers believed that He was God. In Romans 9:5 Paul declared that Jesus was “God over all.” In Titus 2:13 Paul referred to Jesus as “our great God and Savior.”

The resurrection proves that He was God. After Jesus rose from the grave, He was seen at least 12 different times by more than 500 eye witnesses over a period of forty days.

Jesus Christ is not merely a prophet or teacher; He is the divine Son of God. Make room for His deity.

2. They don’t make room for His death.

There are many people who believe in Jesus as the Son of God, but they do not trust in His death to save them from their sins.

What do I mean? If you asked many people, “Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died and rose again?” they would say yes. But then if you would ask them, “Why should God let you into heaven?” they would reply that they are very good, and very religious, and have tried very hard to please God. That answer reveals that the object of their faith is not in the death of Christ, but in their own ability to live up to God’s standards.

Remember, even the demons believe in God, but they are not going to heaven because they do not have saving faith. The kind of faith that saves is when you trust in Christ’s death for your sins and stop trusting in your own performance.

The Bible says that we are all sinners (Rm 3:23). If God gave us what we deserved, it would be eternal punishment. Therefore, the only way to be saved is to be forgiven for our sins. And

that's why Jesus came to earth. **Matthew 1:21** "She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

But if Jesus came to save people from their sins, then why isn't everyone saved? Because to receive the gift of salvation, you must have faith in Jesus. **Acts 16:31** "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."

But as long as you are trusting in your own performance, then you are not trusting Jesus. You may believe in what He has done, but you are not relying upon what He has done. And therefore you are not making room for His death.

To be saved you must admit that you are a sinner deserving of eternal punishment; that you cannot save yourself; and then have faith that God will save you through the death of Jesus Christ.

3. They don't make room for His dominion.

Many people claim to believe in Jesus, and they even claim to be Christians, but they don't make room for His dominion in their lives. They don't make room for His Lordship over their lives. They don't surrender fully to Christ's authority over them. They fail to let Jesus be in complete control over their lives.

Most Christians try to live according the teachings of Jesus, but they still hold on to one or two areas and refuse to give Christ dominion. It might be their sexuality – they might be into pornography, or they might be having pre-marital sex, or they might refuse to give up homosexuality. It might be their money – they might refuse to tithe, or they might refuse to stop making money by dishonest means. It might be drugs or alcohol – they refuse to stop getting drunk or getting high. On the outside these people appear to be pretty good Christians, but there's a secret part of their life, a private area of their life that they refuse to surrender to Jesus.

But that's not true Christianity. **Luke 9:23** "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me." Jesus said that if you to be His follower you need to deny yourself. In other words, deny what you want and defer to what God wants. When your will and God's will collide, deny yourself. And if you want to follow Jesus, you need to take up your cross daily. The cross was a symbol death. So every day, you need to deny yourself and submit to Christ's authority no matter the cost; no matter how painful; no matter how humiliating.

If you want to be a Christian, you must make room for Christ's dominion. One **person** said, "The Christian life is not a makeover; it's a takeover. It's about inviting Jesus take over

everything you are, and everything you have. It's about making Him sole owner; and you're just a manager."

4. They don't make room for His dwelling.

What is God's dwelling place? The church. The church is called the dwelling place of God, or the temple of God. **1 Corinthians 3:16-17** (AMP) "Do you not know and understand that you [the church] are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells [permanently] in you [collectively and individually]?"

Many Christians claim to love Jesus, but they don't prioritize the church. Many don't go at all, and many who do attend don't contribute in any way.

But the local church is God's priority. Not only is the church God's dwelling place, but the Bible refers to it as the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the family of God, the flock of God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Consider Christ's relationship to the church. The Bible says that Christ is building the church (Mt 16:18), He is the head of the church (Eph 5:22), the church is His body (1 Cor 12:27), the church is His bride (Eph 5:25-27), He is the Savior of the church (Eph 5:22), He loves the church (Eph 5:25), He cares for the church (Eph 5:29), He provides for the church (Eph 5:29), and He is making the church holy (Eph 5:25-27).

How can you claim to be committed to Jesus if you are unconnected and uncommitted and uninvolved in His church, the institution that He started and that He is so passionate about?

Is it possible to be a Christian without going to church? Yes. But if church is not a priority in your life in 2019, then God will not be a priority in your life. If you don't make room for the church in 2019, then you're not going to make much room for Jesus in 2019.

Christ wants you attending, and giving, and serving, and building, and loving your church.

5. They don't make room for His directive.

Christ's directive is His mission; His purpose. Many Christians don't make room for Christ's mission. They believe in Jesus, they love Jesus, but they don't have to serve His mission. They don't have time to answer His call. They are too busy building their own kingdom to build the kingdom of God.

We already saw in Matthew 1:21 the reason that Christ came to the earth, to save people from their sins. **Luke 19:10** "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost." **Mark 10:45**

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” And then right before His ascension Christ gave this mission to all Christians. **Matthew 28:19-20** “19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

What is Christ’s directive? To seek and save the lost. To make disciples. To reach the lost, and help them grow to full devotion to Christ. And Jesus has given this directive, this mission, to every Christ-follower. He wants you to use your time, energy, resources, and talents to contribute to the mission. To reach the lost, and build the saved. Introduce people to Jesus, and help them connect to the church where they can grow to maturity in Christ. To make room for Jesus, you must make room for His directive.

6. They don’t make room for His development.

Christ wants you to grow to maturity as a Christian. He wants to develop you. But most Christians don’t make room for His development. Spiritual growth is just like physical fitness. It takes time, money, and energy. It’s not always fun. It’s hard. It requires self-discipline. And so most Christians just don’t make room for spiritual development.

But Christ wants you to grow to maturity. **2 Corinthians 13:11** “Become mature.” **Ephesians 4:15** “But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ.” **2 Peter 3:18** “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

How do you make room for spiritual growth? It’s not a secret. And there’s no easy path. It comes down to spiritual disciplines: Worship on Sundays; Fellowship in Home Group; Commune with God in a Daily Quiet Time; Serve the Lord in church; Give to God through tithing; Develop your understanding through reading Christian books.

7. They don’t make room for His discipline.

Many Christians don’t make room for Christ’s discipline. They love God when life is good, but they hate God when life is bad. They praise God on the good days, but they abandon God on the bad days. But the Bible never promises a problem-free existence to Christians. God never made a deal that says the more devoted you are, the less you will have to suffer. Instead, the Bible says that God allows us to suffer, to go through trials, as a form of discipline. Not to punish us, but to grow us.

Hebrews 12:7, 11 “7 Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline? 11 No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but

painful. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Suffering is not a sign that God doesn't exist, or that God doesn't love you, or that God has failed to keep His promises. Suffering is a sign that God is still working on you. It's a sign that God loves you and has a plan for you and hasn't given up on you.

Make room for Christ's discipline in your life. When you suffer, don't curse God, or reject God, or rebel against God. Instead, trust Him, draw near to Him, praise Him, and try to learn what He want to teach you.

CONCLUSION

As we close out 2018 and kick of 2019, how do you need to make room for Jesus? Do you need to make room for His deity? His death? His dominion? His dwelling? His directive? His development? His discipline?

Alexander the great was making his way with his army to the East to conquer the world. They came to a huge fortified city, and Alexander called for the king to come out and surrender. The king laughed and said that with these walls why should he surrender. Alexander gave the king an illustration. Near the city walls was a steep cliff. Alexander ordered his men to line up in a single column and walk to the edge of the cliff. The citizens of the city climbed up the city wall to watch. The first, second, third, and fourth man fell and plunged to their deaths. Then Alexander ordered them to stop and face the citizens on top of the wall. The citizens' amazement turned to terror as they realized there were no walls high enough to protect them from that kind of commitment and determination. They climbed down from wall, went out the city gates, and knelt at Alexander's feet and surrendered.

This same kind of unconditional, radical commitment is demanded of us by Jesus Christ. To make room for Jesus, you must have that kind of devotion.

This year make room for Jesus. Make a commitment to seek Him, to serve Him, to love Him, to grow in Him, to give to Him, to obey Him, and to sacrifice for Him like never before. And if you do, I'll make you a guarantee: 2019 will be the best year of your life, because you made room for Jesus.