

**JOURNEY OF LOVE DEVOTIONALS
WEEK #5 – JOURNEY OF LIGHT**

December 20th – Monday

Centering Breath Prayer: Child of light...make room in my heart.

Opening Prayer:

Holy Christ Child, help me to make room for you in my heart. Use this quiet time of reflection to push aside the cares and uncompleted tasks which lie before me and focus my life upon the light you brought so long ago. Stay in my heart throughout the day filling it with the wonder of you and the "good news" you brought. In your lovely name, I pray. Amen.

Scripture: Luke 2:1-7

Key Verses: Luke 2:6-7: (6) "While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born (7) and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (NIV).

No room! No room! There's no room in the inn? Can you imagine the scene? Joseph is standing in the middle of the well worn path telling Mary that there is no room for them at the inn. He is jostled by others because they are blocking the way. This sleepy little village of Bethlehem is filled with many strangers all because Caesar wants to count noses! The inn is full and they have no place to go. It has been a nightmare trip. They have traveled several days to get here at a time when no sane person would willingly travel. After all, the baby is due to come at any time now. Mary's face looks pinched and scared as the night begins to fall around them. Joseph goes back to the door to the inn and talks once more to the innkeeper. Isn't there somewhere they can stay? It doesn't need to be anything great, but Mary needs to be under some kind of shelter. What if the baby should come? The innkeeper is very busy, but finally agrees reluctantly to allow them to shelter in the stables with the animals. At least it will be out of the wind and cold air. The straw will give a little comfort. It's better than sleeping beside the road again. And, perhaps they could get some warm food! With relief, Joseph returns to Mary's side and leads her around the back of the inn to the stable.

Isn't it amazing how often the Bible throws out tidbits of knowledge without any detail? We are often left to imagine why or how things happened. Why did Caesar require people to leave their homes and go to another place for his census? Why didn't they just go to the different villages and count how many people lived in them? Why did Mary go with Joseph? Couldn't he have just told them he had a wife with a child on the way? "There was no room for them in the inn." We don't really have to ask why the inn was full. Everyone from the house of David had to go to Bethlehem to be counted. It was a small village usually. There was no need for lots of inns. Yet, here were all these people descending on this small village for a short while. It is easy to condemn the innkeeper for not having a better place for a woman whose child is about to be born. But, we don't know his circumstances either. He may even have given away his own room earlier to someone else. Mary and Joseph could have camped out on the road.

They probably had done just that on their way to Bethlehem. And perhaps there were many others who did. But the innkeeper gave them such shelter as he had left, even if it was just a stable.

How full is our inn? Is there room in our life for Mary and Joseph and a newborn babe? Have we allowed our hearts and our lives to be filled to overflowing with the extra tasks and commitments so that we have no room for the Christ Child? What's so incredibly special with our hearts and our spirits, is that they are never really full. We can always allow God into them and when we do, the rest of the residents can be blessed as well. Unlike the innkeeper, we don't have to give the Christ Child our leftovers, because there is always room for the Christ Child. What we need to remember is that by giving the Christ Child first place in our hearts and our spirits, we expand our capacity to handle the extra demands on us. Jesus taught us to "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33 KJV). Jesus is teaching about ceasing to worry about every little thing including what to wear or to eat. As our lives get more and more crowded with the extra "guests" (the tasks and the commitments) in our lives, we can choose to let them take over and ruin our lives or we can allow the Christ Child to empower us so that we are enabled to handle them. Only by giving space in our hearts and our lives to the Christ Child can we truly seek him first. We will never know what happened to the innkeeper. We don't know if he was willing or reluctant to give what he had to Mary and Joseph. Only God knows what really happened. But, we can know the fullness of God's pleasure when we give first place to the Christ Child in our "inns" (our hearts and our lives). This allows the light to shine through our lives and brings the "good news" to those around us. No room in the inn? Not my "inn!" Yes, it's full, but the Christ Child creates more and more rooms everyday. Not only is there room for the Christ Child, but everyday he adds more room for his people as well.

Additional Scripture: Matthew 6:25-34

Questions for reflection and/or journaling:

1. What is crowding my "inn?"
2. Is the Christ Child given first place or my leftovers?
3. How am I welcoming the Christ Child into my "inn?"

Suggestions for action:

1. Phrase for your tree: **MAKE ROOM IN YOUR "INN."**
2. If you have a "nativity" at your home or office, spend a few moments with it and remember the story of Christ's birth. If you do not have one, think about getting one for your home.
3. If there is a homeless shelter or ministry for the homeless in your town, look into the possibility of working with this ministry during the coming year.

Closing Prayer:

Blessed Christ Child, welcome to the "inn" of my life. Be first in my life today and empower me to welcome all your people as well. As I go through this day, with all its hassles and concerns, be foremost in my thoughts and increase my capacity to love. Spread your light over my way as I enter Bethlehem and join the Holy Family in the stable. In your exalted name, I pray. Amen.