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Title: The Inn: Housing the Holy – Invited Home

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Text: [Luke 2:1-14](#)

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[Watch the service.](#)



Tonight, we are celebrating the moment when heaven meets earth.

Christmas is not merely an anniversary celebration of Jesus's birth, we aren't simply marking an event in history, rather we are remembering what God has already done in Jesus and anticipating what God will continue

doing in Jesus, in the gift of a savior for all the world.

We are concluding a series tonight called, The Inn: Housing the Holy, and we have been thinking of the Inn not only as a physical place but a spiritual place as well. As Mary and Joseph were looking for a place to have their child, a place for Jesus to be born, the Gospel of Luke tells us this,

"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn."
Luke 2:7 (NRSV)

There was no place for them in the inn. In this moment, where heaven meets earth, there was no room at the inn.

That is the challenge for us tonight... to make sure there is room in our lives and our hearts, there is room in the inn for us to receive the gift of a child born for each one of us.

Many years ago, the spiritual thinker, writer, and preacher Fredrick Buechner wrote what he believed the innkeeper was thinking on the night that Mary and Joseph came, looking for a room at the inn in which to have their baby. Here is part of what he believes the innkeeper was thinking: "I speak to you as people of the world," said the Innkeeper. "Not as idealists, but as realists. Do you know what it is like to run an inn—to run a business, a family, to run anything in this world for that matter, even your own life? It is like being lost in a forest of a million trees," said the Innkeeper, "and each tree is a thing to be done. Is there fresh linen on all the beds? Did the

children put on their coats before they went out? Has the letter been written, the book read? Is there money enough left in the bank? Today we have food in our bellies and clothes on our backs, but what can we do to make sure that we will have them still tomorrow? A million trees. A million things.”

There are a million things that each of us is concerned about. From the smallest of concerns to the largest, including an ongoing pandemic, the imagined words of the Innkeeper resonate with us. History may judge the innkeeper harshly, but I am more like the innkeeper that I am comfortable admitting. No room at the inn, God, no room for a young, poor couple getting ready to have a baby. No room and no time for heaven to meet earth.

But that is what takes place on this night. That is what we are here to receive and that is what we are here to celebrate, heaven meeting earth in a way that it never had before and never has since. It sounds like a preacher term or some deep theological term, doesn't it, *heaven meets earth*? But it's real. It's God coming to be with all the earth in a new way, in a way that changes everything.

Your first instinct may be to dismiss this idea. After all, we celebrate Christmas each year. I mentioned last week that no one is going to be surprised to wake up on Christmas morning and discover that Jesus is going to be born. No one is going to be surprised that we are going to end our service by raising candles high and proclaiming that the light of the world has come, that Christ the Savior is born. Then we walk into a world where it feels like nothing much has changed at all.

Adam Grant is a writer and professor and, in his book, *Think Again* he talks about a scenario where you have just finished taking a multiple-choice test and you start to second guess one of your answers. You have finished early, so you have time to go back and look at the question again. Do you stick with your first instinct, or do you change it? He says around 75% of students are convinced that revising their answers will hurt their scores. Most believe their first thought; their first instinct is correct over rethinking something.

Study after study says something different. Studies show that the overwhelming majority of answers that are revised are revised from wrong to right on second thought. He says in his classes he has noticed that the students whose exams have more eraser marks, those who have rethought their initial answers rather than staying anchored to them, tend to score higher than students with fewer eraser marks. This is called the first-instinct fallacy.

The truth is we hesitate to rethink what we think we know. *We don't even like thinking about rethinking what we already know.*

The idea of heaven meeting earth tonight.

The idea of the savior being born as a baby in a manger because there was no room at the end.

The idea that God so loves the world that God would come to be with the world in a new way.

We may think we know all there is to know about this. The idea of heaven meeting earth maybe just a little too far-fetched.

Christmas challenges us to rethink what we think we already know. Christmas challenges us to rethink what we think we know about God, about how God works in and views the world, challenges us to rethink our own lives and our relationship to God.

Several years ago, I was talking to a pastor friend of mine who is older than me, a mentor to me. It was in the middle of December, and I asked him how his Advent was going. He said, Advent had been over for a while and Christmas had already come. He proceeded to tell me that Christmas had come in August when their 18-year-old daughter became sober and had stayed sober since then. That was their Christmas: *a moment when heaven meets earth.*

Over the past several weeks, through Thanksgiving and Christmas, through your generosity, Geist Christian Church has helped close to a thousand people have food on the table and gifts under the tree through Season of Giving. One of the blessings of this year is being able to deliver directly to families once again, moments when heaven meets earth. One of the most moving stories that you told this year was when one member's generosity provided among other things, a twin bed for a young man to sleep on. When delivering last Saturday, they noticed the house the family lived in literally had no furniture. In conversation, the mom, commenting on the bed, said that her son had been sleeping on the floor of the house. You will never know how much this bed means to him and us. *A moment when heaven meets earth.*

A couple of weeks ago, tornadoes that swept across Kentucky, Illinois, Arkansas, and Tennessee devastated several communities and took people's lives. A tragic weather scenario. One of the hardest-hit communities was the southwestern Kentucky town of Mayfield. One of our sister congregations,

First Christian Church of Mayfield, had its historic building almost destroyed. One can only imagine how difficult this would be. As the light of day dawned, as the extensive damage to the church was surveyed, it was discovered that their communion table, the place where the bread and cup remind us of God's saving power through Jesus, their communion table stood in a destroyed worship space, fully intact. During chaos and destruction, this reminder of God's love and grace stood. *A moment where heaven meets earth.*

Whether you have been a person of faith all of your life, or are exploring faith after a time away, or maybe you have decided it's not for you, perhaps it's time we rethink what the birth of Jesus means.

Each of us is invited home by God this Christmas, invited to make room for the God who has already made room for us.

You are invited home tonight, to experience this moment in the birth of Jesus, where heaven meets earth. You are invited to reconsider what this means for your own life and our world.

Invited to make room for the God who has already made room for you.

Let Us Pray.