

Luke 2:1-20
“Home in Christ”
Meditation at the Manger
The Rev. Dr. Jean Halligan Vandergrift
Christmas Eve, December 24, 2021

If you would, look with me again at this stable. No matter how many Christmas Eves you have seen the nativity scene, gaze upon it anew with me tonight.

This year, it occurs to me that upon his birth, **Jesus made a home** out of the innkeeper’s stable. Yes, it was probably questionable from a structural perspective; you could likely see the star through its roof; it may not have been completely dry. Undoubtedly, it wasn’t the cleanest habitation, especially for a newborn, but it was a good shelter for the farm animals, and they let the baby and his parents share their hay and their feeding trough.

Though homeless, Jesus made of this stable a home – a home that welcomed so many and such a variety of beings! Some are mentioned in the story; others we can infer.

There was Mary and Joseph, of course. Jesus drew them in by God’s grace. The singing host of angels was also taken in under Emmanuel’s spell. The shepherds, too; not of a high station in society, poor, probably illiterate, dirty, hard-working. Jesus drew them in. It is reasonable to assume that the innkeeper also checked into matters that night and maybe even enlisted a local midwife. Jesus attracted these into his home as well.

The magi didn’t really arrive until later, once Jesus was in a house, but their presence indicates that **Jesus made wherever he was a home** for others: the traveler, the scientist, the well-off and respected – the practitioners of religions other than his own – those defying Herod. What a broad and diverse home Jesus creates!

Yes, there are so many interesting things and people to focus upon in this story. Just like the holiday of Christmas itself as we practice it in our culture: we have so many different places to give our attention: sparkling lights, colors, decorations, tasks, housekeeping for guests, and presents. Where should we look? Here, or here, or here? This Christmas story is also like life in this world, when all around us there is the pandemic and politics, injustice and entertainment, all of which can easily capture and overwhelm us. Too much choice; where shall we look? What will gain our attention? There are so many dangers and distractions these days that we have trouble feeling at home anywhere, ever!

So tonight, let’s be sure to focus on Jesus Christ.

Let him draw *you* in. Gaze upon him; look into *his* eyes, however long you can. Time is not the issue. Look upon him: all of God that the human form can hold. See in his infant dependence your own vulnerability. After all, all of us fight to feel good about ourselves everyday. See your worth by looking through God’s eyes, through Jesus Christ. All of us depend upon others for what we need and upon the systems of basic survival as he did.

See in this so-called ‘weakness,’ your power. See in his divine nature and mission the love of God and the grace to be forgiven and start over. By looking at him, we learn what to focus upon that is happening in the world and to be engaged where and when we ought. By looking upon him and those who gathered at his manger, experience salvation in community, with those unlike you, yet the same. Wherever Jesus is, he makes that place home, and you are welcome!

Focus on Jesus Christ. Then you’ll be home, wherever you are, *in Christ*.