

## Midnight Communion      No room at the Inn!

### Cards

I wonder what sorts of pictures were on the cards you received this Christmas.  
It always amazes me at the huge variety and the fact that I rarely get a duplicated one

robins              winter scenes                      baubles              Father Christmas

And what about any with parts of the nativity story on??

Kings... always make good picture    often 3 riding on camels

Well - not mentioned in tonight's account but in the other account in Matthew's gospel...

    wise men or astrologers probably more accurate & yes 3 gifts but may not have been 3 men

What about from our reading this evening

    Joseph & Mary travelling - on a donkey  
        to Bethlehem

    Baby lying in a manger - an animals feeding trough

    Shepherds and their flock of sheep in fields

    Angel (s)

All sorts of variations on these parts of the first Christmas story

Some poetic licence employed to make the scenes look attractive enough to put on cards

Want to think for a moment about the Inn

The word is used in most Biblical versions of the birth of Jesus

But in reality it was unlikely to be an Inn    in a place like Bethlehem

Customs of the time meant that hospitality was given by everyone    to anyone in need, even complete strangers

So in a town there was no need for an Inn because there were peoples homes in which travellers    or people in need of a drink and a bed    could stay

An Inn would be more likely in out of the way places or on well used roads where there was no where else to get shelter

A more accurate translation, rather than Inn,,, would be guest room

Thats a shame because I have seen many a good Inn Keeper played in a variety of school nativity plays,    some relishing the authority they are given when they have to say "THERE IS NO ROOM IN THE INN !!"    The occasional near fight has even been known to break out.

But why worry about this - Inn or guest room - you may be asking,    when there is plenty of poetic license shown in many of the pictures and re-tellings of the birth of Jesus.

Well - homes 2000 years ago were built with just one main room where everyone lived. There would probably have been a mezzanine type room where folks slept and the animals were kept in an enclosed area that was just a bit lower, likely with no roof

It may have been that there was just literally NO SPACE for Mary & Joseph in the guest room of someones house rather than that they were actively refused they just could not fit in

Hospitality protocol meant that the home owners would have been expected to offer them a bed, BUT with all the visitors to Bethlehem it was just impossible to fit them in.... they were over crowded and the only space left was in the animal quarters where there would have been a feeding stall - a manger - which doubled up as a cot for the new born baby.

My question to all of us tonight is this....

Are our lives so busy, so full of work and people and concerns and..... that Jesus just doesn't fit in, we simply don't make room for Him

We have all made some space in our activities of Christmas to come this evening and sing some carols and celebrate His birth together which is fantastic.... a beautiful time to come together

But what about the other 364 days of the year??

God came to earth as the baby Jesus, born this day in the city of David as Saviour, Messiah, Lord Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace to establish justice and great joy

Can I urge you to think about His place in your life day to day and to make a deliberate decision about where and how He fits so that He is simply not just crowded out by everything else that fills our days, someone we indulge with a bit of poetic licence at Christmas

God offers us soooo much more

He can give us peace that is beyond human understanding even when everything else around is in chaos

He can enable a deep joy that goes deeper than the that induced by the odd glass of wine... or 2 :-)

One translation of the Isaiah reading says

*His ruling authority will grow, and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he brings*

Isn't that something that we all long for

So have a wonderful Christmas and I pray that Jesus will become an increasing part of your day to day life tonight and always.

Amen