

**PARK HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
CHRISTMAS EVE
REV. JOHN L. THOMPSON
“NO ROOM FOR JESUS”
Luke 2:1-14
DECEMBER 24, 2009
8:00 P.M. Service**

“No room for them in the inn.” Those words have touched hearts for two thousand years. *“No room.”* Is there room for Christ in your world this evening? That’s the simple question we need to ask. Do you have room for him? So many things can crowd him out.

For example, the busy-ness of this season of the year can crowd him out. This service this evening may be the first chance many of you have had to catch your breath and to take in the true meaning of this holiday season.

Sometimes we become so involved in the tasks and details of Christmas that we forget the One we are honoring. The very busy-ness of the season may keep us from making room for Christ.

Our own coldness of heart may also keep him out. Not everyone is prepared spiritually for the coming of Christ into their heart.

The Christian Century carried a story years ago, written by Harriet Richie. It told about an incident in her family’s life that revealed to her the true nature of Christmas.

Following their church’s late night Christmas Eve service, Harriet’s family decided to stop somewhere for a late-night breakfast. The only place open that late on Christmas Eve was a truck stop at a nearby interstate junction.

A few big diesels rumbled outside. Inside a few truckers sat at the counter. A jukebox played a country song that went something like this: **“When You Leave, Walk Out Backwards So I’ll Think You’re Coming In.”** On the front window

were a few multicolored blinking lights. The place smelled like bacon grease and stale cigarette smoke. A one-armed man stood behind the counter. The family squeezed into a booth. A thin waitress named Rita sauntered over. She managed a weary smile and handed them their menus.

Harriet looked around. She felt a little bit like a snob--and out of place. Her family had just come from a beautiful Christmas Eve service. And soon they would be heading to their lovely home for the night. She thought one day they would look back with a laugh and say to each other: **“Remember the Christmas we ate breakfast at that truck stop? That awful music and those tacky lights?”**

She was staring out the window when an old Volkswagen van drove up. A young man with a beard and wearing jeans got out. He walked around and opened the door for a young woman who was holding a baby. They hurried inside and took a booth nearby.

When Rita, the waitress, took their order the baby began to cry and neither of the young parents could quiet him. Rita reached over and held out her arms. **“Sit down and drink your coffee, hon, let me see what I can do.”**

It was evident that Rita had done this before with her own brood. She began talking and walking around the place. She showed the baby to one of the truckers who began whistling and making silly faces. The baby stopped crying. She showed the baby the blinking lights on the window and the lights on the jukebox. She brought the baby over to Harriet’s table. **“Just look at this little darlin’.”** She said. **“Mine are so big and grown.”** The one-armed fellow behind the counter brought a pot of coffee to Harriet’s table. As he refilled their mugs, Harriet felt tears in her eyes. Her husband wanted to know what was wrong.

“Nothing. Just Christmas,” she told him, reaching in her purse for a Kleenex and a quarter. **“Go see if you can find a Christmas song on the jukebox,”** she told the children.

When they were gone, Harriet said, **“He’d come here, wouldn’t he?”**

“Who?” her husband asked.

“Jesus,” Harriet said. **“If Jesus were born in this town tonight and the choices were our neighborhood, the church or this truck stop, it would be here, wouldn’t it?”**

Her husband didn’t answer right away, but looked around the place, looked at the people. Finally he said, **“Either here or a homeless shelter.”**

“That’s what bothers me,” Harriet said. **“When we first got here I felt sorry for these people because they probably aren’t going home to neighborhoods where the houses have candles in the windows and wreaths on the doors. And listening to that awful music, I thought, I’ll bet nobody here has even heard of Handel. Now I think that more than any place I know, this is where Christmas is. But I don’t belong.”**

As they walked to the car, her husband put his arm around her. **“Remember,”** he reminded her ***“the angel said, ‘I bring good news of great joy to ALL people.’”***

(1)

If you have room in your heart for Christ this night, that story could change the way you look at the world. Merry Christmas!

1. Harriett Richie, “Christmas in a Truck Stop,” *Christian Century*, Dec 13, 1995.