

"NO ROOM"

In Luke 2 we have two words that came before me, and I long that we should feel their power. Concerning the Lord Jesus at the time of birth it is written "No room". We can well understand why this was so. The taxing arrangements had brought many to that district, - those who were linked with Bethlehem. Very possibly a feast time made it convenient, and TWO things were accomplished at once. Anyhow, there was no room for THEM, and the word 'room' is the word 'place'. There was no place in the inn. The inn was the very house (if I might so call it), where we should expect rest. The name given to it suggests an 'untying', 'unbinding of the sandals', 'unloosing of the girdle', - relief and rest. The place that ought to have provided relief had no room. OTHERS found their rest, but the Lord Jesus Christ is marked at the beginning as without room at the inn. In the midst of His life He had not where to lay His head; and He ended His earthly life, not lying on a bed, but stretched upon a cross. From beginning to end He is marked out as the One Who was a Stranger in the world He made. Oh beloved friends, how thus cuts at all idea of our self-pleasing and self-indulgence. One walks about this city just before a so-called Christmas, and gazes in passing at the flesh-pampering displays as if to invite gluttony and indulgence, and one thinks of the hollowness of a profession that it is in the name of Christ, the One Who for our sakes became poor that

we through His poverty might be rich, - the One Who emptied Himself, - the One Who laid aside His glory. The hollowness of the world's profession is a miserable travesty. "No room", "No place". But thanks be unto God, if there was no place at the inn, there was a place; and so we read the precious words "Lying in a manger" - a place for Him. The manger suggests the tame animals, and afterwards we find in the wilderness He was with the wild animals. The whole of His life shines out remarkably.

We read further, that when He grew up to do that ministry which He came to do, He went about from place to place. In Luke 10. 1 moreover, He chose others, and sent them to every place, as well as every city, whither He Himself would go. Always was He finding a fresh place. Men did not give Him places, but He chose places that He might declare the glorious message of the gospel. It was a true word which the dying thief said "This man did nothing out of place", for such is the literal meaning of 'nothing amiss'. Nothing was out of place. Everywhere He went at the right time. He went about doing good. Nothing was out of place. The time went on and last of all He was about to die, and the words ring out concerning the place of Gethsemane where He went, and the place of judgment where He was tried; and then they took Him to the place called Calvary, and in the place where He was crucified there was a garden. There was He laid in the tomb, and the angel could say, Behold the place where the Lord lay. Oh it is wondrous to see the stress on the word 'place' at the end of His life. A place to pray, a place to be judged, a place to be crucified, a place where He was crucified near to the city, and a place to be buried. The word rings out. He always found the right place to carry out His Father's will. If there was not a place for Him in the inn, there was a place for Him on the cross. The world had room for a cross. It had not room for a comfort for the Lord of glory. We say we are His followers. We little realize what this means. Christianity is not a comfortable, easy-going thing. We have not given up much for our Lord yet. We complain of our trials, we murmur over our difficulties. How small they all are compared with what our Lord gave up for us. Oh that we might enter into the fulness of His love and praise Him more; and He not only had the place of rejection, but He bore wrath. O beloved friends, think what this means. He bore wrath. Can you understand it? We little realize what it must have been to Him to bear wrath. The intensity of HIS love to the Father, for He was the One Who

had been in the bosom of the Father, Who was ever with the Father, the intensity of His love made the feeling of wrath inexpressibly terrible. Language fails. For a sinner to feel wrath is to feel anguish and a weight of wrath, but for One Who absolutely loved, and had been not only for myriads of years, but from eternity, with the Father, - for Him to bear the Father's wrath was inexpressible pain.

Just before He went to judgment, He said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many abiding places; if it were not so I would have told you, I go to prepare a PLACE for you. And if I go and prepare a PLACE for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself: that where I am, there ye may be also". A place for you! O beloved friends, it is a delightful thought, that though there was no place for Him, He does not say "I have no place for you". He came to His own things, and His own people received Him not. "I will come again and receive you". Man gave Him hatred for His love, but in wondrous love He loved His enemies, hating ones, to CHANGE them into friends. We said, No; but He said, Yes; and the "Yes" of His love conquered the "No" of our unbelief, and He won us with His work, and He wooed us with His grace. "I go to prepare a place for you". A place for you! - not in a manger, not only in a temporary inn, but "in My Father's house", a place for you! It is My Father's house, He says. The Son abideth ever, and He, the Son Who abideth ever, has a right to prepare a place in the house. "Prepare me also a lodging" says God's servant, "I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you". A lodging - I cannot stay very long. The Lord has not prepared us a lodging, "I go to prepare a place for you". I love to think of the change of words - "I go TO prepare", and "If I go AND prepare". There are many things you and I have gone TO do, and we have not gone AND done. We have stopped on the way. Christ says "I go TO". "And if I go AND prepare". He WOULD not be stopped on the way. He would carry out the work. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also". Just before this the Lord had alluded to Peter's denial. He had said that before the cock should finish crowing Peter would deny Him, and He foreknew that they would all forsake Him and flee, but - "I go to prepare a place for you", for you, the runaway disciples; yes for you the one who denies. I will not

deny you the blessing of grace! I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also. Peter alas, sat with the servants and warmed himself, the servants of the high priest, in the high priests palace. He was in the wrong place, and warmed himself, and everything went wrong; and Another High Priest has a palace and He will not put Peter to sit with the servants. The Son makes him free. "I will come and receive YOU" - the you who denied Me or forsook Me. "I will come and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also". It is a wondrous thought of love, yet it never excuses one sin. There are different places in glory. In Luke 14 we read, Lo, it is done as Thou hast commanded, and yet there is place. Go out quickly and compel to come in, that My house may be filled. But the same chapter says, Do not take the highest place, lest another is bidden, and he that bid thee and him should say, Give this man place, and thou begin with shame to take the lowest place. The lowest place. There are DIFFERENT places in the glory. "I go to prepare a place," but where will our place be?

We must tell the world of coming wrath. We must emphasize the fact of coming wrath. We must bring before those in our very midst and our homes, the fact that those who despise God's mercy will meet misery, and those who know not His grace will bear His judgment. There is wrath. There is a doom, though there is a free message of salvation still, so free that our emptiness may be made a very encouragement, and the poor guilty sinner in this room tonight, stripped of the rags of self-righteousness, stripped of self-esteem, is welcome to a Saviour Who saves nothings, who saves the helpless and hopeless! Thus there is no place for wrath against such, but the place prepared in the glory becomes theirs, and the Holy Spirit emphasizes this One Way of salvation, that in the ages to come God might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

(Abridged)