

Lent Meditations part 2

The Innkeeper

Luke 2:6-7

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 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 in the inn.

When I think of an 'Inn', it conjures up images of an 18th Century coaching inn, with rowdy patrons quaffing ale from pewter tankards.

There would certainly have been no place like that in Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth. In fact, the inn referred to in Luke's gospel was probably no more than an annex to a house where guests could stay.

The 'Innkeeper' was likely to have been a senior member of a household with such accommodation.

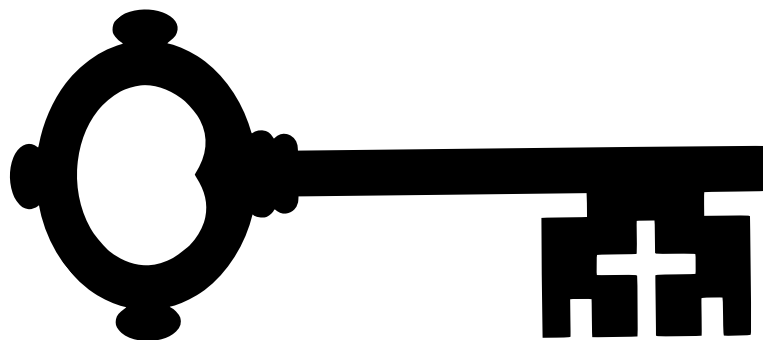
Isn't it interesting that that one short half-sentence, '*because there was no room in the inn.*', has caused a whole other story to be created. Luke does not mention an Innkeeper at all, yet the Innkeeper has become an important character in many tellings of the nativity story, often becoming a costumed member of the cast in nativity dramas.

The Innkeeper has received much bad press along the way, being cast as rather wicked as he turns Joseph and the heavily pregnant Mary, most likely in the advanced stages of labour, away from suitable accommodation and forcing them to bed down in a smelly stable.

But I actually see the Innkeeper as being a kind soul who, faced with a dilemma, found a way to help a couple who were in a difficult situation, thereby saving them from spending a night out in the open. Giving birth in such circumstances could have had dire consequences.

The Innkeeper could not turn out guests already accommodated, but with a kind heart he found a solution, by offering the stable, which would have been attached to the house, and would at least have been dry and warm.

I also have an image of the Innkeeper fetching a key and unlocking the stable for Mary and Joseph and trying his best to ensure that they were as comfortable as possible. They would certainly have been warm sharing the space with animals, protected from the cold Palestinian night.



For this **meditation** you can either look at this image of a key, or perhaps print it, so that you can have it with you and hold it.

Look at the key. See that in the bit of the key part of the cut forms a cross. Also, the bit looks something like the silhouette of a house of the time and place of Jesus' birth.

With this key what can you unlock? What, in your life, needs unlocking?

Are there issues you have been avoiding that need opening up?

Is there a difficult relationship that needs to be unlocked?

Or, maybe, just unlock your heart and open up fully to God's grace, love and mercy?

Use this key to aid your focus for a few minutes each day and ask God to help you unlock all that needs to be opened. Be your own Innkeeper, with kindness to yourself and to others.