

Hear again this Christmas story-
Christ is born in all His glory.
Baby laid in manger dark,
Lighting ages with the spark
Of innocence that is the Child,
Trusting all within His smile.
Tell again the Christmas story
With the halo of His glory;
Halo born of humbleness
By the breath of cattle blest,
By the poverty of stall
Where a bed of straw is all,
By a door closed at the Inn
Where only men of means get in,
By a door closed to the poor.
Christ is born on earthen floor
In a stable with no lock-
Yet kingdoms tremble at the shock
Of a King in swaddling clothes
At an address no one knows
Because there is no hotel sign-
Nothing but a star divine,
Nothing but a halo bright
About His young head in the night.
Mary's Son in manger born!
Music of the Angel's horn!
Mary's Son in straw and glory!
Wonder of the Christmas story!

-Monologue from "Black Nativity" written by Langston Hughes

This monologue came from the play, Black Nativity, written by Langston Hughes, the famous African American poet who lived from 1902 to 1967.

He lived during a time when there was no room for people like him.

There was no room for them in public universities or public restrooms or restaurants or public swimming pools.

There was no room for his children at the best public schools,

there was no money for them to have the newer books or school supplies,

there was no room for people of color in our country for so long.

Many still feel that way today, along with other groups as well.

Muslims feel like there's no room for them in schools or the workplace with their covered heads and prayer rugs.

Latino children feel like there's no room for them in their classes when they ask their teachers why nobody likes them.

LGBT folks say there's no room for them in the courthouse where they're trying to get their marriage licenses.

Mentally ill folks are told there's no room in the hospitals for their care,

and homeless people are told there's no room in our cities for one more shelter, and sorry, all the beds at current shelters are full.

Differently-abled children are told there's no room for them on sports teams or in advanced classes because they're different.

The earth is groaning in pain and she is told, sorry, there's no room in our legislative agenda to advocate for you,

there's no room in our budgets for money to protect you even though we all literally depend on you for survival.

Transgender folks are told there's no room for them in public restrooms, and refugees fleeing war-torn countries, are told that there's no room for them here in America.

They are greeted "by a door closed at the Inn, Where only men of means get in, By a door closed to the poor."

But you know what? "Christ is born on earthen floor."

That's how God works.

God always finds a way, that's what makes God, God.

God's ways are not our own and God's force of goodness and love is so strong that no amount of our intercepting will prevent God's will from happening on earth.

If there ever was a regime or empire that might have been strong enough to prevent God's love from spreading throughout the earth, you'd think it might've been the Roman Empire, but even that mighty civilization couldn't stop God.

They said there was no room at the inn, God said no problem, I know there's a stable out there.

Herod said there was no room in Bethlehem, God said no problem, off to Egypt we go.

God always finds a way in and around and through our roadblocks.

That's what the Christmas story is about, love being born in the unlikeliest of times in the unlikeliest of places.

God always finds a way, and that reality is just as true today as it was two thousand years ago.

We might say, sorry, there's no room in our budget to help you,

or there's no space in our town for the person who is different,

or there's no time in my schedule to visit someone who is suffering,

or there's no room in my heart to love the person who doesn't think like me,

God says, take a deep breath, trust me, there's always room.

You say there's not enough money, not enough time, not enough space in our community, not enough energy to help the other, then God says, yes there is.

Look at how you're spending your time, your money, your energy, look at how you're using your space.

There is more than enough of all that we have to make sure that everyone is taken care of, it's our job to have an attitude of extravagance rather than scarcity.

To believe that there are limited resources, that there isn't enough to go around, that mindset gets very dangerous very quickly.

Then we are suddenly in the position of deciding who gets what, who is taken care of and who isn't,

who is deserving and who isn't, and that's frightening.

God says don't worry about sorting and categorizing people, just love them, shower them with love, whoever they are.

Give as much as you can, open your door to everyone whom you can,

and trust in the fact that when you are in need, someone will open their door for you,

someone will give of what they have for you.

The idea that we don't need each other is ludicrous.

The idea that we can stockpile our wealth to take care of our own without regard for others,

completely ignores that sacred truth which is that we are called to care for each other, family, friend, neighbor, even stranger and enemy.

Anne Frank said, *“Nobody ever became poor by giving.”*

If you show people kindness and love and generosity, it will come back to you, maybe even with greater returns.

Because the truth is that we remember who cared for us, who loved us when we needed it, who reached out to us when we were alone, who made room for us when we thought there was no vacancy, and I bet any of us would return the favor to the people who helped us, should they ever need it.

God will find a way, it’s true, but let us not be the ones who put up obstacles.

Let’s make a clear path between each of us and all of humanity, so that love and patience and understanding can flow freely.

Let us not put up roadblocks of xenophobia and hatred and fear, which make it really hard for love to make its way around the world.

God will find a way, and we have this sacred story that we celebrate tonight because people said “yes” when given the opportunity to help others-

Joseph and Mary and the animals and the angels and the shepherds and the wise men!

The wise men who listened to God instead of Herod and thereby saved Jesus' life,

all these people said "yes" and allowed God to work through them so that Christ might be born this night.

Jesus' message of love and acceptance feels like it's needed now as much as it has ever been.

So as you celebrate Christ's birth tomorrow and as you set your intentions for the coming year, I hope that you choose to have an attitude of extravagance rather than scarcity,

of generosity rather than greed,

of wonder rather than judgment.

And when you see an opportunity to help others,

I hope you always, always lean towards 'yes,' knowing that in doing so, you are allowing God to work through you, to spread love and kindness to the ends of the earth.

After all, even though the baby was laid in manger dark,

he lit the ages with the spark,

and even though he born by the poverty of stall,

where the straw of bed is all,

in a stable with no lock,

kingdoms still trembled at the shock.

And even though he was at an address no one knows,
because there is no hotel sign,

we still welcome Mary's Son in straw and glory,

and we still wonder at the Christmas story!

God always finds a way.

The question is, will you be a hope-bearing, God-trusting, love-spreading beacon of light in our world?

This Christmas, may you remember that you are needed, every one of us is needed.

So I hope you have enough faith and trust in God to open your heart,

open your doors,

open your arms,

and remember that there is enough room, there's always enough room.

Amen and Merry Christmas my friends. Amen.