



# The Journey

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www.fcc-hsv.org

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, December 8**, at Noon [publisher@fcc-hsv.org](mailto:publisher@fcc-hsv.org)

## THE MANGER AND THE INN

Recently a number of scholars have tried to shed some light on the truth about Joseph's family's situation by investigating Palestinian peasant living conditions and customs. I have an excellent book by Kenneth E. Bailey about the peasant cultural background of first century Palestine entitled *Through Peasant Eyes*. He also wrote an article I am summarizing from the *Theological Review*, "The Manger and the Inn: The Cultural Background of Luke 2:7." It makes some stunning observations that challenges our contemporary interpretation of what exactly happened on that first Christmas Eve.

The most important point to keep in mind is that it would go without saying (and thus does so in Luke) that if Joseph and his pregnant wife showed up in his family's village of origin, they would be greeted as long-lost brothers and sisters. No effort would be spared on their behalf. Kinship ties were the strongest, most important realities governing the everyday life of these peasants. To turn away visiting relatives was positively unthinkable. Mary's condition would only reaffirm that sociological fact. If Mary had shown up pregnant and alone in a strange town, the story might have been different. But she had Joseph's name and the status of wife, making her pregnancy a positive, joyful expectation.

But still we are appalled at the testimony that there was no room at the inn. The word translated in Luke as "inn" is *katalyma*, a term elsewhere designated as a special guest chamber, and that guest room is often attached to a home. Indeed it is in a *katalyma* where Jesus and the disciples gather for their last Passover supper (Mark 14:14, Luke 22:11). What seems likely then is that upon arriving in Bethlehem,

Joseph sought out family with which to stay. Yet because of the census the town was crowded with visitors and the separate guest room of this relative's house was already filled.

The baby Jesus when born was "laid in a manger," also takes on new significance when viewed in a middle-Eastern light. In our Western arrogance we see this wimpy Joseph settling his laboring wife into a stable for the night, leaving her nowhere to put the newborn when it arrived but in a feeding trough for animals. What Kenneth Bailey points out is that Palestinian peasants kept any livestock they might own in their homes during cold nights. Not only were the animals likely to be their most valuable possessions, they also added to the home's warmth at nights. To accommodate this arrangement, Palestinian homes were often constructed with an upper level to be used by the human occupants, leaving the packed earth floor below for the animals. Built into this floor were wooden or stone feeding troughs (mangers) with sturdy sloping sides that would serve nicely as a cradle.

The event of Jesus' birth now reads quite differently. Joseph brings Mary to the home of some relatives. With their separate guest chamber already filled, the family invites Joseph and Mary to join them in their regular living quarters. There in the midst of family, and certainly with other women to attend her (for childbirth was ritually unclean for men), Mary gave birth. Once the baby was cleaned and well swaddled, he was placed in the safety of a secure manger below, enabling Mary to get some much needed rest.

See you Sunday,

*Pastor Cameron*

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11

Old Testament                      Isaiah 35:1-10  
 Epistle                                 James 5:7-10  
 Sermon Text                         Matthew 11:2-11  
 Sermon                                 "What Are You Expecting?"

### SERVING AT THE TABLE

8:15 Nancy Waites & Jan Mackenzie  
 10:30 Tom Hodge & Mack Vann

### COMMUNION PREPARATION

Delores Edgeton

### SERVING COMMUNION

8:15 Carl & Carol Jones  
 Jackie Sameck & Ann Thompson  
 10:30 Mary Ann Anderson & Nancy Woodall  
 Charles & Pam Gilliland

### COFFEE FELLOWSHIP

Chuck & Penny Jackman

**SUNDAY'S FOOD BASKET** is in honor of Stan Ball's birthday by Matt & Karen.

### CHILDREN WORSHIP & WONDER

*The Shepherds Show the Way to Bethlehem*

Pastor Laura  
 Tara Thorne  
 Clara Sexton

### YOUNG DISCIPLES (Meets 2nd & 4th Sundays)

*John, Follower of Jesus, Teaches throughout the World*

Christi Sexton  
 Dave Sexton

**HELP IS NEEDED** in the Nursery and Toddler rooms on Sunday mornings. Please see the sign up poster in the Commons and sign up now for first or second shift on one Sunday in December and January. We need loving hands to assist our attendants.

## CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

**Sunday, December 11, after second service (11:30) to approve the 2017 budget.**

Please prayerfully consider pledging for 2017. If you intend to pledge and haven't done so yet, please return your pledge card to the offering bowl or church office prior to the Congregational meeting on the 11th. Your pledge is important for underwriting the proposed 2017 budget. Pledge cards are on the table in the narthex next to the main entrance. Thank you for your consideration and support.

Dave McMahan, Moderator

### CHRISTMAS GIVING OPPORTUNITY

The Community Outreach December service project offers another opportunity to share our many blessing with others. A twenty-five dollar (\$25) gift card from Kroger or Walmart will be collected for DHR, CASA, or Grateful Life this holiday season. Please leave the gift card in the collection bowl or the office. If you wish the committee to purchase the gift card for you, please make your check to FCC and "CO - gift cards" in the item line. The last day for collection is Sunday, December 18.

Last year 16 cards per group were delivered! Can we make it happen again this year?



**Partners in Prayer** Advent devotional booklets are available in the Commons Area. The supply is limited, so take one per family

ATTENDANCE	11/27	12/4
First Service Worship	25	48
Sunday School	NR	45
Second Service Worship	80	91
Children's Church	0	5
Young Disciples	6	NA
Hanging of the Greens	65	NA
<b>Total Worship</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>144</b>

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Remember to log on through AmazonSmile at <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/63-6017148> if you shop at Amazon!

### WE JOIN FORCES WITH HEROES TO CELEBRATE CHILDREN

Community Outreach and Christian Women's Ministries are working together to support Shop With a Hero, a project designed to give "at risk" children in the Huntsville/Madison County School Systems a Merry Christmas. On December 10, 2016, each "Hero" will be paired with a child and given a \$100 gift card. The "Hero" will help the child purchase presents for their family and themselves. You can sponsor a child /children anytime until the event on Dec. 10 by writing a check to FCC with Shop With a Hero (SWAH) on the memo line. Any amount is appreciated. We are signing up heroes and volunteers to help with this project, so please consider volunteering on Dec. 10 to help the children shop and to help wrap their gifts. For more information contact Jeff Seward or visit [www.shopwithahero.info](http://www.shopwithahero.info).



### CHURCH CHRISTMAS CARDS MAILBOX

Starting December 4th, and running until January 1st, our Church Christmas Mailbox will be back so that we can exchange Christmas cards among the congregation. If you will deposit them in the large Christmas Mailbox, we will sort them and put them out for you to pick up. You will be able to pick them up in the Commons Area at the "Post Office". **We will not mail these cards**, so only the name is needed on the envelope. **You will have until January 8th to pick them up.**

### VINTAGE VAGABONDS CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

Sign up now for a guaranteed spot on the VV trip to Yesterday's event center in Athens for lunch and musical entertainment on Friday, December 16. Cost is \$11 paid at time of sign up with check made out to FCC (Note: VV Dec.). Sign up sheet and folder are in the church office. Reservations must be completed by Friday, December 9. We have only 20 reservations. Contact Sue Seward for more information.

### POINSETTIAS FOR THE ADVENT SEASON

If you would you like to honor a friend or remember a loved one with a poinsettia for our Advent tree, please make a \$10 donation to cover the cost of a poinsettia and list your donor information on the signup sheet posted on the flower sheet across from McMains Hall. Make your check payable to FCC, write "poinsettia" in the memo line, and drop it in the offering plate or church office. If you have any questions, please contact Margaret J. Vann at email: [trilliumjv@knology.net](mailto:trilliumjv@knology.net) or phone 256-533-4213



### FCC PRESCHOOL/ELEMENTARY CLASS NEEDS YOUR HELP FOR A SHEEP

As part of Heifer International, the preschool/elementary class is raising money for a sheep. A coffee container is on the coffee table in the Commons Area. Please help us raise enough for a sheep.

Thank You Preschool/ Elementary Class