NEW ROOM AT THE INN (Inn Keeper of Bethlehem – first person)

by Steven Felker

A first person account from the perspective of the Inn Keeper of Bethlehem. Suggested for Christmas Eve. Stage notes & service notes at the end.

(Setting – a tall table or lectern at center stage – a lantern is on the front edge of it) (You are setting to the task of your evening’s accounting – approach, toss on or dump out a bag of coin. Unroll an accounting scroll, etc. Take your time – don’t speak too soon. “Light” your “lantern” and begin work.)

**** act as if you hear a voice from off stage

“I know hon, I’ll be along as soon as I can!”

**** notice the audience...

I know it’s late at night – These days it’s the only time left to do your book work and your planning

The Inn business is tough.

Our culture is known for its hospitality. If you need a place, you assemble yourself at the gate, and someone will often take you in. If you have a relative, they are basically obligated to take you in.

So I get the left-overs. Foreigners, the most distrusted, the suspicious: you know the like. It’s not a great life, but I make a living.

Lately, though, it’s been 24/7.

Seems Caesar wants his due, so he has decreed that all people should return to their hometown to be numbered. Bethlehem has been a zoo ever since.

****

See, we’re the hometown of the great king David. Especially in these patriotic times under the oppression of those Roman thugs any one who can in any way identify themselves with King David is coming to Bethlehem. It was written by Micah a long time ago –

Micah 5:2 “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

As you might imagine, the hospitality business has drained all of us!

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It was a night like this when this man stepped in my door. Behind him I could make out the unmistakeable silhouette of a young woman “great” with child. They both looked beaten down.

“I need a room”

“I don’t have a room.” My wife and I don’t even have a room. We started letting out our own space back when the money got so good and are bedding down in our cookspace.
Something bothered me about this picture. Why do you suppose they can't find lodging with relatives? Who among their clan wouldn't take in a woman in her condition?

Sizing them up, I figured this is probably some sort of a squeamish pregnancy—I'll bet the days don't add up between how far along she is with child and their wedding. Certainly, there is no way he'd take her if this kid wasn't his...

**** (adopt gossip mode!)

Although, weirder things have been happening!

Have you heard the stories coming out of Jericho lately?!

First Zechariah the priest has some kind of visitation while offering incense at the temple. He comes home dumber than a rock—not a sound!

Then Elizabeth his wife gets pregnant. No big deal, except that she is way past the years for bearing children!

Then it gets weirder! Some relative of Elizabeth’s shows up, claiming to be with child by the Spirit of God, and saying that this child is going to be the promised Messiah!

(Shake head…) Sometimes you’re better off not knowing other people’s business!

****

This man at my door isn’t going away. I have no rooms. It’s late.

“Do you have any shelter? My wife is increasingly uncomfortable.”

Well… not that you’d want it—I’ve got a stable out back. The animals are out to pasture. I’ve mucked it out recently. The straw is fresh. It’s better than nothing at this hour, but it’s all I’ve got.

He thanked me and took his leave.

Finally I fell to sleep. Even rest is hard to come by these days.

**** ****

Shepherds! What an awful bunch!

You know…– I almost smelled them before I heard them?!

They lived with the animals, smelled like animals, and acted like animals.

And then…! (Rap on lectern as if knocking on door—unless microphone is too sensitive…!) What are they banging on my door at this hour for! Good night—I’ve got guests! I’ve got a “bit” of a reputation!

Well. You can’t believe the story those shepherds told! They were living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

(Expressive) You should have seen their eyes!!

(Confiding…)Whatever happened out there, Something happened, and I didn’t know what it was!

They say they’ve been half the night going through the town, looking for a baby in a manger, and do I keep animals?

I figure my neighbors were about as happy as I was at that point.

And as I was about to remove them from my premises, I remembered: (slowly, with thought….) – In my stable…– tonight…– a woman who definitely was in the family way! *** (ponder…)

**** (practice this next line til smooth!)

The shepherds got real quiet—like they knew that I knew what they needed to know, but I didn’t yet know that I knew it!

**** (pick up lantern and hold it away and higher, take a half step)

So I said to them SHH!!!! CMON! And I took my lantern and led the way out back.

(Lower lantern… ****)
Have you ever come into a place and had a sense that time and space changed? – Like when you break into a glade hiking on a hot summer’s day: The light, the air, the smell, and all else is just different?

You know it isn’t a time to speak or laugh or cry, its just a time to “be?”

**** (set lantern back on lectern, come on your elbow or some other more contemplative posture)

Maybe once, maybe twice in my life I have had that moment of wonder. This was definitely it!

****

They’d piled hay up around themselves. There was a newborn – wrapped and lying in the manger. The Missus was asleep, curled up against her husband. He nodded to us, but no one spoke.

The shepherds came and knelt. One whispered their story to the man. His smile and the glint in his eye told me he already knew.

****!!

And then the shepherds were off. Back to the fields? Not yet! First they decided to pound on the rest of the doors of Bethlehem and tell what they had heard. The whole town was astir by breakfast!

I wasn’t so fast. Have you ever felt elated and ashamed at the same time? Like when you’re someplace you’ve been invited and yet you have no business being there and you know it but you’re there anyway and it is OK?

I knew these parents, this child, should have been in the best room I had. I should be sleeping in the barn!

Yet that stable was full of grace. Someone for whom I’d had no time or space had forgiven and welcomed me. No words were spoken – it just happened in my soul.

Tonight they will sleep in my best. – It’s not much, its not enough, but its my best. If the words of the angels aren’t true, then I’ve done a good thing. But if they are…! Then I’ve given my king my best.

Meanwhile, I will always live with shame and grace.

Shame, because my king came and there was no room or time for him in my Inn or my life.

Yet he came anyway, and received what little I would give. And his gift of grace opened my heart – not just to him, but to every person who bears his image who crosses my path.

When I sit down at the end of my day to do my books, the account that really matters is the one that records how I served and how I worshiped.

A night like tonight brings back to my mind that night those years ago – I remember the scent of the hay, crushed beneath my knees when I bowed down before a baby and worshiped a King.

(Closing appeal – tailor it to your situation)

To whom do you bow? Whom do you worship? Whom do you serve?

There is none better to worship and adore than this holy child.

**** (blow on your lantern as you shut off your switch, exit)

Stage notes: Simple middle-eastern dress will suffice – head piece and drape. You will want a lantern. I wired one with a dimmer switch – I could strike a match, “light” the lamp, and then “adjust” the flame. Not too much light – it will overwhelm your scene – test it out an evening prior and mark your settings. If you have glasses, lose them – the lamp glare will obliterate your features. Just print this REAL BIG!

At points in the script, **** marks a point where you will do well to shift your bearing – turn, stand taller, etc. to emphasize a shift in the train of thought. Additional notes will be in parentheses. Most of all, tell the story and enjoy it yourself!


Drop me a note and let me know how it goes: <>. Contact me for permission to reprint for purposes beyond personal use.

To God be the Glory!

Rev. Steven Felker is pastor of Christ Chapel in Ithaca, NY
Find profile info, photo gallery, latest news, stats, full form guide and betting odds for racehorse Inn Keeper - Brought to you by Punters.com.au. Caulfield 30-May-20 1100m GOOD 4 R6 HCP $18,000 (of $100,000) Barrier 1, Winning Time: 1:04.61, SP: $13 In-running: 800m 6th, 400m 7th Sectionals: 600m 0:35.000. Midfield, rail, good inside sprint, great finish. 1st Tavisan (B Melham 56) 2nd Inn Keeper (C Williams 56) 0.50L 3rd I Am Someone (D Bates 57) 1.00L. See full results. 2. of 10. Cranbourne 15-May-20 1200m SOFT 5 R6 BM84 $5,670 (of $31,500) Barrier 2, Winning Time: 1:11.68, SP: $6 In-running: 800m 5th, 400m 6th Sectionals: 600m 0:36.540. 1st Victoria Star (C Newitt 56) 2nd Inn Keeper (D Moor 63) 1.50L 3rd Travimyfriend (H Grace 61.5, C Plan of the first Bethlem.[1]. Map of London in c. 1300. St Mary Spital is shown north of the city wall, outside Bishopgate. The hospital was founded in 1247 as the Priory of the New Order of our Lady of Bethlehem in the city of London during the reign of Henry III. The subordination of the priory's religious order to the bishops of Bethlehem was further underlined in the foundational charter, which stipulated that the prior, canons and inmates were to wear a star upon their cloaks and capes to symbolise their obedience to the church of Bethlehem.[7]. Politics and patronage[edit]. For the remainder, keepers were paid either by the families and friends of inmates or by the parish authorities. It is possible that keepers negotiated their fees for these latter categories of patients.[49]. Bethlehem Inn, Bend, OR. 3,206 likes · 54 talking about this · 914 were here. Central Oregon’s largest emergency shelter serving men, women and families. Although we are not able to celebrate all the extraordinary hearts that volunteer at Bethlehem Inn in person this year, we still want to share our gratitude...