

# He Left the Door Open



**Bro Ricky Cunningham**

**Luke 2:6–7**

I hope you are having a very merry Christmas weekend. Yesterday when all of our kids went home, it was after dark. They were all day long and we loved it; it's one of our traditions. Then Memish and I got to do a tradition that we have been doing ever since we have been married. We started the tradition with her having the remote control in her hand...and the next thing you know, she was saying, "I can't find it. I can't find it. I can't find it." But finally, we found it on WPSD TV— It's a Wonderful Life. We sat down on the couches to watch it, and I have to confess that at our age we probably can't say we watched it; we dozed through it. It's just one of our traditions. I don't know about you, but we love that story. It's a black and white originally released in 1946. George Bailey, God bless him, in the beginning of that movie saves his brother, saves a pharmacist from making a fatal mistake, and saves his father's business, the Bailey and Building and Loan. And then, when life got rough (because his uncle Billy misplaced an \$8,000 deposit) he was thinking he didn't want to live anymore, and standing there on that bridge he does what only George Bailey would do...he saved the life of his guardian angel who had jumped in. Now,

George didn't know Clarence was an angel, but once the angel was rescued (I love the scene), he makes the statement "I wish I would have never been born." Clarence gets this little look...and he decides to make it happen. For the rest of the movie, we watch what life would have been like in Bedford Falls, or should I say Pottersville, if George Bailey had not been born. The pharmacist served a twenty year prison sentence and never became that successful guy he came to be because there was no George Bailey. That transport ship in the war that had been saved, all of them died because Harry, his brother, died in that accident. The Building and Loan disappeared years and years before. Throughout the movie, George is trying to convince people who he is but no one knows him. What brought him to his senses was he realized his wife, Mary, had never married, and never had kids. She is alone and works in a library. George tried to embrace her, but she didn't recognize him and she fled. He pursues her into a crowd of people, and she fainted. It changed his life. He now realizes what life would have been like had he not been born. I love that last scene where he goes back home, now alive again. He rushes into his house, and there are the people who are going to arrest him over the missing money. The next thing you know, Mary brings literally the whole town in and they just begin to dump money on the table. And then, Harry who's getting a congressional medal of honor arrives, and he looks at his brother and he makes a toast "To my brother, the richest man in town!" Wow. There's just something about that movie that stirs us. When you think about a man who had such an influence but didn't realize the influence he had, and life got him to a place that he wished he had never been born.

Well, today is not about George Bailey. You know that. It's about Jesus Christ. I couldn't help as I watched that movie again knowing this was going to be Christmas Sunday, I just began to imagine what would life be like had Jesus Christ not been born. Have you ever thought about that? But I have got some really, really good news — He was born. I just want to say I don't believe there has ever been a day in His existence when He wished He had never been born. Amen? Let's walk through the first seven verses of Luke chapter 2 quickly this morning.

Caesar Augustus, a man who claimed to be God, orders a census. Every man must now go back to his hometown and register for this census. After Luke tells us that the whole world is going to be registered, he now focuses in on Joseph who is in Galilee, particularly of the town of Nazareth. Because he's of the house and lineage of David, he must go back to his hometown, which is Bethlehem in Judea. He takes with him his betrothed wife, Mary, and here's the scandal — she's pregnant with child. Now, we have this picture that when they arrive in Bethlehem they can't find a place to stay, and then suddenly she goes into labor pains. That's not what Luke presents. Luke says while they were there, her days were fulfilled for her to give birth. So the picture really is this; they have been there for a little while. And then while they are taking the Roman census, she goes into labor, and she brings forth her firstborn Son, she wraps Him in swaddling cloths, and then she lays Him in a manger. Then Luke, as only Luke can do (being an historian, being a medical doctor, it's amazing his attention to detail), for some reason wants us to know why He was laid in a manger. You know the answer — because there was no room in the inn.

I grew up with Christmas play after Christmas play of an inn that look like a Motel 6 and an innkeeper with dollar signs in his eyes — greedy, cold hearted — sending Joseph and pregnant Mary, on down the road because he was so tickled his inn was full. That's not the picture. As a matter of fact, many scholars don't even believe there was an inn in Bethlehem for them to stay in. The word that Luke uses is not the normal word for inn that he's going to use later when he talks about the story of the Good Samaritan. If it was an inn, it was a place where there would be crude stall rooms around an open courtyard that would have a half wall, and on the other side of that half wall is where the animals would stay. Some scholars believe that is what he might be referring to. So Jesus would have been born in that animal courtyard off of the main courtyard because there was no room in any of the individual crude rooms or stalls for Joseph and Mary. Other scholars believe instead that this is referring to a house and that the word for inn literally means guest room, and what Luke is saying is there was no room in the guest rooms. In the biblical world, your house at this time would have had your living area and then you had another area

where you kept your animals. Then you had special rooms for guests because the Jews were big for hospitality.

Here is my opinion...that word for room, or place, that Luke tells us about is where we get our English word, topography from, which means literally the lay of the land. So I think Luke is saying a guest room or an inn was no fitting place for Jesus to be born. So, do you know where He was born? Now, I can only say this one way because I am of western culture...when I read this, no matter which scholars write it, this sounds like to me he was born in a barn. Amen? Now, I am not talking about a barn like at my house; I am talking about a place where we house animals, a place where there's a feeding trough. Here's what we know — because there was no fitting place in a guest room or the inn in the house for Jesus to be born, the most fitting place for Him to be born in God's eyes was where the animals are — and they lay Him in a manger.

Now, I have just this thought this morning. I know it's Christmas morning and I don't be disrespectful, but do you think there was ever a time when Jesus was growing up, his mother looked at Him and said, "Were you born in a barn?" Amen? To which He would have said, "Yes, I was born in a barn." Now, how many of you are old enough to know what the question, were you born in a barn, means? We had Christmas with Celisa's dad this week and we met in the Woman's Clubhouse at Hazel, and all of the kids were there. I can't tell you how many times we would say, "Deacon, shut the door!" "Jackson, shut the door!" "G, please shut the door!" Every time, those little boys (like it wasn't their fault) would blame the person who was supposed to come in after them. In their minds, they opened the door, they went through the door, but somebody else was going to follow them. Now, I know they weren't big enough to know this expression but there were several times I wanted to say, "Were you boys born in a barn?" but I didn't. I just did what we papaws do...we close the door, right? We don't make a big deal about them leaving the door open. That's the picture of the birth of Christ.

Now, I want us to focus in on this one thought this morning — unlike George Bailey, Jesus never wished He had not been born. Because if He had not been born, He knew there wouldn't have been His life, there

wouldn't have been His death, there wouldn't have been His burial, there wouldn't have been His resurrection, there wouldn't have been His ascension, there wouldn't be His return, and we would have no hope. Unlike George Bailey who had to have a visit from an angel to make him aware of what life in Bedford Falls would be like if he had not been born, Jesus already knew — because before He became a man He was God, second person of the triune Godhead. He knew the life you would live if He hadn't have come, so He came to live the life you couldn't live. He suffered, and in the midst of that suffering, never one time did He look at His Father and say I wish I had never been born. He took on human nature just like you and me, tempted just like you and me, yet not one time did He give in to the temptation. He took on the power of sin and condemned sin in the flesh because He knew you and I couldn't. And He died the death we should have. We all know this — it should have been us on that cross, no not even on the cross, it should be us in a lake of fire for eternity, separated from God forever and ever and ever because of what we have done to Him. We deserve that. On that cross for six hours, He paid our eternal sin debt. He lived the life we couldn't so He could die to death we should've, so that right now we can live the life He lived. Amen? And this is all symbolized by Him being born in a barn.

Can I say this? No disrespect to the gospel narrative, but to bring it into modern culture I want to ask you, do you believe He was born in a barn? Do you know why He was born in a barn? It was so He could leave the door open. He went into the presence of God with a sacrifice that ripped that curtain in two in the temple, signifying that the door is open. Do you know why that door is not closed today? It's because He wants you to follow Him into the presence of His Father and live forever and ever and ever. Are you a follower of Jesus?