

It just does not matter how many times I read the Christmas story from Luke, to myself or to a class of young children, the verse “And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, BECAUSE THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR THEM IN THE INN,” downright confounds me! The, “No room for THEM” part, frankly, mystifies me. There seems no good human reason for this.

We all know, as earthly parents, what a big deal it is to have absolutely everything in good order long before the first labor pain. Our hospital suitcase is packed full in the foyer or already in the trunk of our vehicle. The nursery is ready with diapers, blankets, and a ridiculous amount of toiletries, enough to clean a whole tribe of babies. The point is, we earthly parents are, for the most part, prepared. Well, as best as we can be, anyway. The 2:00 a.m. feedings take a bit of getting used to, but by and large, we are prepared.

But for Mary and Joseph, there is a long difficult trip on the back of a donkey, no room in the inn, no soft bed to give birth, and an animal’s trough for Baby Jesus’ bed. See my struggle?

How could such a small sliver of scripture do this to me? The truth is it doesn’t disturb my husband a bit. His pastoral faith walk glides right through Luke 2:7, without so much as a wince. Perhaps it’s because I am female and having had four children, without so much

as an aspirin, I clearly identify with Mary.

Although I am amazed at the faith Mary and Joseph had to trust God via an angel, I am perplexed at the arduous journeys God allowed the Holy Family to endure. Fleeing to Egypt, dealing with anxiety-ridden wise men, the scents/sense of a stable, and my list goes on. Surely, God never left Mary or Joseph. I believe in my heart that is true, so maybe their journey was for each one of us.

When things go wrong during the holidays, from burnt Christmas cookies to economic uncertainty, somehow it gives me great comfort to remember the manger and the journey to Bethlehem only to discover that all the inns were filled. Had I been Mary, I know my response would have been, “I can’t believe this, I really can’t! Joseph, I have to laugh or surely I’ll cry.”

There have been countless moments in my life, as a pastor’s wife, a mother, a teacher, and an administrator, where by God’s grace alone, I chose to laugh.

Certainly, if Jesus’ family experienced life’s unexplainable circumstances, how can I expect my life to be any different? Ironically, the words manger and inn have become my ‘anchor words’ during life’s most challenging moments. At those times, I think of Luke 2:7, and remarkably they bring me great comfort ... and often keep me laughing.

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The Inn-side story of the manger

by Deborah Hauser

