

The Cowboy and the Livery

It was a dark and snowy night. The horse labored through the deep snowdrifts, carrying the gunslinger cowboy to his destination. The snow was at blizzard strength, and it was hard to see more than a few feet in any direction.

Finally, the way became clear. There was a small town down below. Maybe he could find a place to hang up his spurs for the night.

The snow filled the small main street, the footprints and hoof prints of passersby clearly visible. The storefronts were decorated for Christmas, which was coming up in the morning.

Loud music came from the only saloon in town, and people were streaming in and out. The church across the street was empty and dark, and he thought of the contrast, and the priorities which weren't quite up to snuff.

He tied the reigns to the wood hitching post in front of the hotel. The message on Christmas Eve? Of course. "No room," said the burly innkeeper at the front desk. "But, believe it or not, there is room in the livery stable."

As the cowboy sauntered across the street, his horse following close behind, he saw a light in the church. He stabled his mount, and walked over to the church.

Inside was the pastor, a white-haired man of diminutive height. He was gathered around the table with a few parishioners, and there was a bible in their midst.

He was reading, his voice a little raspy from years of sermons. "And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 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.")

He paused for a moment, as he noticed the stranger in the room. "And what's your name, Mister? Welcome to our world!"

You could have heard a pin drop when he answered.

"Joseph is my name. You know, there is really no room in the inn."

“Well, there is room around this table. We were just discussing that very thing.” The pastor smiled, and waved him to a seat. “Matthew, tell him what you were just saying, if you don’t mind.

The red-faced, heavy-set man spoke.

“You see how the bar is full across the street, and there is no one here? It’s because they have no room for Jesus in their hearts. They are caught up with six shooters and bar tunes, and gambling and rough talk, and don’t know that Jesus has come to save them from all that.”

“Yes, I see it all the time,” replied the cowboy. “I travel a lot in my profession, and if people do go to church, they only do it on Sunday. And most do it only now and then.”

“Perhaps it’s because we never told them about Jesus,” chimed in a young woman. “Those of us who know should tell somebody. My name is Mary, by the way.”

“I always say there’s no time like the present.” The cowboy was new to the group but no stranger to this discussion. “Let’s go across the street.”

So the five of them rose from the table, trudged through the snow, and pushed open the doors to the saloon. The party was in full swing, but everything stopped. All eyes were on the small group.

“Tonight is Christmas Eve,” said the pastor with a smile. “Jesus came to Bethlehem to save us all. Do you have room in your hearts for him?”

That was all it took. The entire atmosphere changed, as God worked his Christmas magic.

The piano player began playing Christmas carols. The money from the card game was handed to Joseph. The tables became groups of people who took a break from their lives to talk about Christmas.

Then something even more wonderful happened. As the small group walked across the street, everyone in the bar followed.

The minister walked up to the pulpit. The room was full, and for a few minutes the only focus was on Jesus who now was in the hearts of all who gathered there.

“Joseph took his family to the inn, and there was no room. But there is room in all of our hearts for him. All it takes is welcoming Jesus to your life, and everything changes”

The cowboy spoke a brief word.

“Thanks for havin’ room today. My name is Joseph, too, and every time they point me to the stable, the whole town changes.”

May God do that for you today!