

A SEASON OF NO

She wrapped Him snugly in strips of cloth and laid Him in a manger because there was no lodging available for them (Luke 2:7).

My mother called me on Monday afternoon to tell me her furnace was not working, and she had no heat. I got to her house at 4:00 p.m. and tried to get the furnace working but to no avail. I called a local heating company before 4:30 p.m. to see if they could get there that afternoon or evening. I called their office and then called their emergency messaging service. Both times I got no answer. I left my phone number hoping they would call back after supper, but I received no phone call.

It wasn't until the next morning when I finally received a phone call that they would send a technician over. Tuesday morning at 10:00 a.m. the service technician gave us the news that my mom's furnace was beyond repair and as a result a new one would need to be installed. There she was with one more day of no heat until they could install the new furnace on Wednesday.

These past three days have been a time of "no" for my mom when it comes to heat. Her situation served as a reminder to me how this second wave of COVID-19 has brought upon us a whole list of "No's":

- "No to non-essential businesses being open at this time in Toronto and Peel,
- "No" to company Christmas parties and celebrations,
- "No" to large gatherings,
- "No" to singing our favourite Christmas hymns and carols at church,
- "No" to extracurricular school sports and activities,
- "No to many snowbirds traveling south to escape winter,
- "No" to our typical Christmas,
- "No" vaccines will be distributed in Canada until sometime in 2021.

The list of "No's" during this second wave of COVID-19 is extensive and keeps growing. All of these "No's" remind me of the "No" that Mary and Joseph encountered upon arriving in Bethlehem – NO ROOM in the inn.

Bethlehem was busier than usual as a result of many other Jews like Mary and Joseph travelling at that time to register for the census that was decreed by Augustus. It must have been very worrisome and stressful for

this couple expecting the birth of a child to keep hearing the word “no” as they searched for a place to stay. While one innkeeper said no to a room, he did say yes to Mary and Joseph spending the night in the stable.

Despite being told “no” to a room, let’s consider what God did for this couple by providing them this stable for the night:

- a) They had shelter,
- b) They had a safe place to rest and stay the night,
- c) They had a manger in which to lay the Christ child after his birth,
- d) They experienced a visit from the shepherds who told them everything the angels had said,
- e) They experienced astonishment and were uplifted after hearing what the shepherds told them,
- f) Mary’s heart was touched by what she heard, and she thought about it often,
- g) Mary and Joseph received confirmation that night that the baby they were gazing at was indeed the SON OF THE MOST HIGH GOD.

Despite being told “NO” to a room, Mary and Joseph experienced a memorable and special first Christmas that night in the stable.

Like Mary and Joseph, there are a lot of “No’s” for us leading into this Christmas. This will be a different Christmas for us in many ways but one thing we can be reassured of is that God will make it special for us just like He did for Mary and Joseph. Let’s follow Mary and Joseph’s example this Christmas filled with “NO’s” by staying focused on Christ and paying close attention to the ways God will make this season special.

God Bless and Keep Safe

Pastor Dean