

## **"No Room in the Inn"**

Luke 2:1-7; Acts 2

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Speaker Pete Hiett, Founder of the Hyatt Hotels

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### ***Opening Prayer***

### ***Sermon***

Video – Hyatt Hotel Commercial

*There's a place out there that's different.  
A place whose people understand that the word Welcome is more than a greeting;  
That the things you can't count, count for everything'  
That life is in the details.  
So when you come to this place and find that the details of your life are all that matters,  
You'll understand the difference between a Hotel and the Hyatt.  
And you will say "Thank you, Thank you, Thank you."  
And the people there will smile and say "You're more than welcome."*

"*Thank you, Thank you, Thank you*" ...and the people there will smile and say, "*You're welcome!*" because the things you can't count, count for everything!

That cracks me up...I taught 'em that line...but I didn't really believe that line – they don't believe that line.

When you check out of the hotel, they'll hand you a bill and then you'll notice, "*Hey, they did do some counting!*" And even if you say, "*Thank you. Thank you. Thank you,*" they won't smile and say, "*You're welcome*" unless you hand them something they can count. They don't want you to notice, but...they're selling the dream of that place, where nobody's counting so that they can count...your money. For the details of their bank balance is all that matters. So nice dream: there is a place out there that's different, but not that place.

It's a business "*Hello! – It's all about counting and I should know*

My name is Pete Hiett – founder of the Hyatt Hotels. Pete Hiett – spelled H-I-E-T-T ... 2,000 years ago I hired some illiterate shepherds to paint our very first sign – they paint "Hyatt." Oy vey – but what ya gonna do?

Anyway, I'm Pete Hiett and my first hotel was in a little town named Bethlehem. The Hyatt Bethlehem – Beth – Lehem means "House of Bread." And yeah, you guessed it – I'm that guy – the one in all the school plays. I'm the guy that missed Christmas: "The Innkeeper" – "Innkeeper." I prefer CEO, but I was also COO, Director of Operations, custodian, cook, marketing director...

[Hey ya want some complimentary shampoo? ... best part of stay at a hotel; that and paper seals on the toilet]

I was Marketing Director, Business Manager, and Accountant...and let me tell you along about zero, I had my hands full:

*"Oh little Town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie"*...Not!

It was the time of the Census and they hadn't yet figured out that when you take a census you could, like, go to the people – No! The Romans made all the people – the world – go to them. Just so some stupid Roman could sit on his can and count Jews – 1 Jew, 2 Jew, 3 Jew or should I say 3 Jew, 2 Jew, 1 Jew.

You see on top of everything else, we were having some real accounting troubles; we was making the switch from B.C. to A.D. I had to keep reminding myself, *"Stop countin' backwards, not B.C. – A.D."* We'd been countin' backward as long as anyone could remember...10 B.C., 9 B.C., 8 B.C. We were getting' down to zero and wonderin', *"What's at zero?"*

Some of my friends in the hotel business had the theory: A holiday was comin' up so they capitalized on the idea; opened up a place down the street and called it the Holiday Inn. Somebody opened Caesar's Palace – hoping to attract Roman hot shots for the census. We ran a special on salad – called it Caesar salad.

And we had a jingle – *"At the Hiett, Hiett of Bethlehem – music and passion were always in fashion at the Hyatt...don't fall in love; Hyatt of Bethlehem."* Don't fall in love – "lust," yes – love, no. Why? Love is bad for business. Love "keeps no record of wrong." Love stops counting.

Hiett of Bethlehem: Granted at the time, it probably wasn't what you'd call a hotel. It was me and my family downstairs and an upper sort of room for guests with a stable out back for their animals. More like a house really – the Hiett House.

Ever since I was a kid...I had this dream of a hotel. People from every nation – famous people, powerful people, well-traveled and mysterious people would stay there. Then I'd be famous, powerful, well-traveled and mysterious too. I'd own the Hotel – Hotel for the world and ipso facto – own the world – big dreams. And along about "zero" it seemed to be working – I had a couple Roman hot shots stayin' upstairs. I was movin' and shakin' – doin' business – making money – counting the things that count.

See? It's not like I was what you'd call a "bad guy" - I was in Rotary, I was chairman at the Synagogue Relief Committee – good business. I wasn't a monster. Just busy, real busy, like you and that's how it happened:

No time. No space. No place.

When late one night I hear a knock on the door and find these two tramps out front. He looks like a laborer; she acts like she's in labor. I'm hummin' to myself *"At the Hyatt, Hyatt of Bethlehem."* They didn't look like Hyatt material.

He says, *"Sir, may we have a room? My wife is great with child."*

I think to myself *"She doesn't look that great to me; definitely not Hyatt material. I bet she's connin' me with the labor and delivery routine. I bet they ain't even married."*

I say, *"The outreach is down the street."*

He says, *"Sir, the outreach is full and my betrothed is pregnant, ready to deliver."*

I say, *"Pregnant...well buddy that ain't my fault."*

In absolute seriousness he says, *"It's not my fault either."*

I start to laugh. He looks at me like I'm laughin' at the Virgin Mary or somethin' Well I don't have time for this malarkey. So I said, "*There's no room in the Inn.*" He begged and so I said, "*Look kid, there's a stable out back.*" And I shut the door. It was that easy; I just shut the door.

Well along with my wife, Susanna, and my baby boy, Moisha, I'd just settled down for a long winter's nap; when out on the street there arose such a clatter; I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter. My neighbors are yellin', "*Shut up you stupid, drunk shepherds.*" And sure enough: these flea bag shepherds are runnin' through the street screamin':

*"Angels. Angels. We saw huge glowing, scary Angels and they said tonight in town is born A Savior – Christ the Lord – the Messssssiiiaaaaahhhh."*

Please understand the Messiah was to Bethlehem like aliens is to Roswell, New Mexico. City of David – the prophecies, etc. etc.

One of the shepherds sees me and screams, "*Mr. Hiett. Mr. Hiett we're looking for a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.*" I'm thinkin' "Yep, they're drunk." And then all at once, I remember the two tramps and I just go like this (point behind him). The shepherds take off back of the house to the stable.

Not knowing what to do, I reassured the Romans everything was Kosher and then climbed up on to the roof. From our roof you could look down onto the stable out back. I couldn't believe what I saw; she hadn't been connin' me! She must've given birth in the donkey stall (you could still smell the blood and fluid). They'd wrapped the baby in rags and put him in the feed bin. Now that's weird; but that kind of stuff happens to poor people all the time...What freaked me out was these shepherds – I knew those guys. They were sleaze balls, but now they'd thrown themselves face down in the slop around the manger and I could see they were trembling. These empty-headed shepherds actually believed this was the Messiah.

And I wondered, "What if?"

I don't know how long I stayed on the roof. Normally I didn't have time or space for crazy thought like this. But I like lost myself just staring at the stable: "*I wondered as I wandered.*" I wondered, "What if?" I had said, "*There's no room*" because they were too small – they were beneath me. They didn't fit in The Hyatt and obviously they couldn't pay and obviously I was counting. Obviously I'd have to forgive them their hotel bill. Forgive is an accounting term; forgive is like a swear word to a business man – its bad business.

But, what if? – what if? – what if the shepherds were right? Then the baby wasn't so small. He was way too big and maybe God was counting! You get tangled in business with the big boys and you can lose your shorts. Know what I mean? I figured God was a big boy and a very shrewd business man.

I heard Rabbi Joseph once talked to God. He said, "*God is it true that to you one minute is like 1,000 years and a 1,000 years just a minute?*"

God said, "*Yes Joseph this is true.*"

And Joseph said, "*So, God is it also true that to you 1 penny is like 1 million dollars and 1 million dollars a penny?*"

God said, "*Yes Joseph this is also true.*"

So Joseph says, "God could I just have one of your pennies."

God said, "Yes...in just a minute."

Yeah, that's a joke but that's how I thought of God, a shrewd business man with impeccable accounting skills who always collected on His debts. So I figured if this was the Messiah...best to act like I didn't know and I didn't want to know. I couldn't afford Him, appease Him, get tangled in business with Him. I couldn't think about Him. It's what we all do – it's just too much, too big. We're middle class you know – nothing too small and nothing too big – everything medium.

The baby was either too small or way, way too big. And what if He was both – too small and too big?...all at once? Then all my business sense was non-sense and all my counting didn't count. If this was the Messiah – His smallness made Him huge – inconceivable. He wouldn't fit in my Inn; He wouldn't fit in my head; He wouldn't fit in my heart. He wouldn't fit in my world.

My Inn was full of the world; my head was full of business; my heart was full of me.

I had no room for compassion or forgiveness – this was business.

I had no room for grace – I had to balance the books.

I had no room for mercy – people had to pay their debts.

I had no room for wonder – 'cause I had it all figured out and under control.

I had no room for faith – my business ran like a machine.

I had no room for salvation – I always carried insurance and extra in the bank.

I had no room for love – maybe lust, not love – love can get you crucified.

I had no room for God – He'd just blow my comfortable little middle-class world to smithereens.

I wondered about these things, as I stared at the manger.

Then I remember thinking: you know my life is so full of everything...

Maybe my heart has no room for anything or anyone.

Maybe my heart is so small and hard and dead

There's no room for anyone...except Moisha...Moisha

And he'd snuck in on me...I'd only thought of myself and then, I had a baby – my son. They're born small; they get in your heart, grow, and crack it open...like a root grows in a crack in a rock and busts it open.

I remembered hearing that Isaiah called the Messiah a root and I wondered:

Would God make himself small to enter my heart, grow, and crack it open?

I wondered: What did He want? Room?

There was no room in the Inn...but there was room in the manger...

'Cause it was empty.

I looked at the stable...those mangy shepherds were holding the baby now...

They had room...

Maybe 'cause they were like empty.

I was starting to feel empty too...Bethlehem was still...

Yet the night seemed alive with music...just beyond what I could hear.

I wanted to go down there...I wanted to throw myself down before the manger and cry

"Come in. Come in."

"There's room."

*"You can have my room in the Inn."*

I had just about last myself...forgotten myself...when I heard it!...A voice...Almost audible.

It didn't say "Kill the Christ Child" or "Worship Satan" Just one word:

"Bagels"

And I thought, "Oh no!" "What about the bagels?"

And the Romans and the complimentary breakfast buffet – all included for just \$49.95.

I jumped up, ran downstairs, cursing myself and saying, "Pete, get real. You got business to take care of."

And that's how it happened – "No Room in the Inn!"

For 2,000 years people have judged me for saying "*There's no room in the Inn,*" but you say it too...

When you're too busy to pray...

Too vengeful to forgive...

Every time you hurry past a beggar 'cause you got business to take care of.

"*No room in the Inn*" - the issue isn't room in the Inn its room in your life – 'cause you're full of yourself and yet God gives you your life.

"*Room in the Inn*" - it's like a joke!

No room for the one who made space itself?

No time for the Alpha and Omega – beginning and end?

But there was room in the manger – Its inside, bigger than all the outside, for it contained the one who made space and time itself. But I had no room? Like I was nowhere and nothing and I just shut the door. It's so frightening that you can just shut the door on...

Life

Creation

on God.

You've thought "*If there's a God, He'd just make it totally obvious.*"

Just like I thought, "*If God wants in, He'd just bust the door down.*"

That's what the Romans do: They just bust the door down.

That's what King Herod would do: Just bust the door down.

But maybe God's not like the Romans or Herod.

I kissed up to the Romans – but I hated the Romans.

I let them in my hotel but not my heart.

I kissed up to King Herod – but I hated King Herod.

I kissed up to God and I think I hated God.

You see even if I let Him into my Inn, I wouldn't have let Him into my heart. For 1,500 years we Jews had kissed up to God and I think we hated God. It wasn't just me that had no room.

Well in the morning the little family was gone – stayed at some relatives or something. There were stories: wizards from the East. I heard the young family left.

And then it happened – all my dreams died:

Herod's men didn't knock – they just busted the door down; ripped my 2 year old, screaming, Moisha from my arms and ran a sword through his heart.

All of Bethlehem was an open wound.

King Herod was terrified of the baby born in my stable and I was too. I figured Moisha was payment for my debt against the Holy One of Israel.

The Shepherds, the Magi, Herod's envy, the death of my only son...

It all equaled my secret terror: it was the Messiah on whom I'd shut the door and not just once in Bethlehem...time and time again. I figured that I was damned – and then I really did shut the door for 30 years. Thirty years terrorized that God would come demanding payment on my debts.

Nothing was allowed into my world bigger than me and my control – definitely not people:

People are worlds in themselves and they can hurt you.

I was the Innkeeper – vacant of Life and with no room for people. Only me and my wound – alone in Hell...

a Hell no larger than myself. I don't think anything's smaller than Hell.

It's ironic but business grew. Yet it wasn't my dream – it had become my addiction.

Well anyway along about 30 A.D. I started hearing stories about Jesus the Nazarene. I knew it was Him – He called himself the "Bread of Life..."

Grew up in Nazareth – but He came from the House of Bread: Bethlehem.

I heard He healed people – preached Good News...

I was scared of Him...but intrigued by Him.

By then I was living in Jerusalem. We'd opened the Downtown Hiett (Hyatt) Jerusalem. So I'd hide in the crowds and listen. One day some of His disciples followed me home and said, "*The Teacher says to you 'where is the room where I am to eat the Passover with my disciples?'*" I gave 'em our Upper Room. They had supper and left.

The next day I followed the crowds to the Praetorian and then Calvary and I watched in shock as the Priests and Pharisees and Herod and the Romans, all together, strung him up...

Naked as the night He was born in my stable...

They crucified Him.

I heard Him scream, "*Father forgive them*" and something else. And I watched Him die.

See it wasn't only me that shut the door on Jesus – "*No room in the Inn.*"

Try "no room" in this whole sick world.

I walked home in a pouring rain storm. My head was spinning.

He said, "*Father forgive them*" and "*It is finished.*"

Like He was taking care of business...

that's crazy business – to forgive them...would He forgive me?

And then I wondered, "*Did God take Moisha as payment for my debts or something else?*"

Then I thought, "*The same group that killed Moisha killed Jesus – the Only Son of God*"

Then I thought,

*"Does God feel what I feel?"*

*"Does God hurt like I hurt?"*

*"Is God where I am?"*

*"Could God get that small – small enough to descend into Hell – my Hell?"*

Well something took root in Hell that day.

Now you know the story – He rose from the dead. An old shepherd told me He was the Lamb slain for the sins of the world. That was crazy, but it was then that it occurred to me...

*"That would mean Moisha wasn't payment for my debts. However Jesus, Son of God, was."*

I didn't know what to make of all that...for about 6 weeks. Folks didn't hear much from Jesus' Disciples during that time, but I actually let some of them stay in our Upper Room.

They looked so confused, bewildered and desperate – they kind of reminded me of Jesus' daddy on that fateful night 30 years before.

For the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), they had some friends over to pray. I stayed downstairs. By then my family was gone and I was an old man...an old broken, empty man. One morning for the first time in 30 years, I muttered a prayer, *"God I got nothin'. I'm sorry. Forgive me."* I broke sobbing. A proud businessman never says, *"Forgive me."* I said, *"Forgive me."* If only I could do it over, I'd invite Him in. I'd give Him my room.

Just then I hear the sound of this mighty wind. The house shakes. I see tongues of Fire. They knock me back on my can and I was gone. When I come to, everything was different...

Nothing was empty...

All was full...

And I was full...

Or maybe I just had new eyes, a new heart, and a new brain

'Cause I had stopped counting and everything...everything was Grace.

I was shaking like a drunk shepherd. Then I thought I heard drunk shepherds – lots of 'em. It was those guys in the Upper Room. I ran up there. It was nuts. Then I look out the window and folks from like every nation were swarming to my hotel. One of the guys stood up and yelled from the balcony:

*"Hey everybody. These guys aren't drunk (as you suppose). Its only 9 AM. This is what was prophesized: 'In the last days I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.'"* All Flesh...

*"daughters will prophesy" ...sons have visions (Yada Yada Yada) "and your old men will dream dreams."*

Then it hit me:

- My dreams (*"The hopes and fears of all the years"*) ... my dreams  
My dreams that had died – they were back – bigger than ever!
- My dreams had been, like, resurrected and redeemed.
- My old dreams was just the beginning of God's dream.  
He was growing dreams in me. He was the farmer; I'm the field.
- So my dreams had never been too big, but always too small...  
Too small to hold Him and He is Grace.

That means He's way bigger than my ability to count. So I can't buy Him; I can't own Him; I can't comprehend Him. See??

As long as I thought that I could create my dream, I couldn't receive my dream 'cause my dream is Him...in me. But now I was full of Him and full of Him – I was full of Everything...

I knew he had Moisha

He had me

He had all Creation.

I knew he was in total control. It was according to plan. The fact that the Inn was full, Christ was born in a manger, Romans like bagels, and the fact that I couldn't stop counting. It was all according to plan so I could see that He has stopped counting.

Because "*It is finished*" and Everything is Grace.

I knew He had emptied me, of me, so He could fill me, with Him. So I would know Him and love Him as He is...

All powerful;

Undefeatable;

Irresistible;

GRACE.

So check it out...

There is a place out there that's different.

A place where the things you can't count, count for everything.

There is a place of absolute Grace and that place is called Heaven.

And Heaven was in me.

God was in me.

So check this out...

I didn't create the dream.

I didn't own the dream.

I am the dream that God is dreaming so I know the difference between a hotel and the Hyatt.

I could buy a hotel,

but I am the Hyatt.

Built not by human hands, but build by God

Owned and operated by God, to house God.

Did you hear me? God!

He's bigger than the world, famous, powerful, well-travelled, and mysterious – He's Life and Love.

*"At the Hyatt, the Peter Hiett, music and passion are always in fashion – at the Hiett...He fell in Love (the Peter Hiett...He fell in love)."*

That day, Pentecost, in the Upper Room...I fell to my knees and I cried out, "Thank you. Thank you. Thank you." And I felt God smile and I heard Jesus say, "Pete, Pete...You are more than welcome."

I was a living Nativity scene. We was a living Nativity scene. You can read about it – Acts, chapter 2.

We sold our possessions – I sold the hotel and gave the money to the poor.

We shared everything in common and no one was in need.

And that place was a different kind of place. Know what we called it? Church – who'd have figured? Right?

Well anyway, I didn't miss Christmas and neither should you. The guy in the Upper Room, on Pentecost, finished his speech sayin...

*"And it shall be in that day, that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved..."*

(Yada Yada Yada Yada)

*"repent and be baptized and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

It happens in different ways...

Sometimes *"tongues of Fire."*

Sometimes *"How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given."*

Either way, it's Christmas Eve. Open the door and give Him your room. You can do that, just by singing this song and meaning it.

Sing *O Little Town of Bethlehem.*

### ***Communion***

In the Upper Room, that night, before He was crucified...it was Christmas Eve for all Creation. For Jesus, the Bread of Life, took bread, blessed it and broke it saying, *"Take and eat, this is my Body."* He took a cup saying, *"Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the Covenant which is poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sins."*

He is the Bread of Life. So when you take the bread you literally become *"beh-lehem"* - the place of bread – the house of bread.

You become His sanctuary; His temple; His living Nativity scene.

The only condition is that there are no conditions. You can't earn this, buy this, or deserve this – you must stop counting for this cup is the Eternal Covenant of Grace. This covenant supersedes all Covenants. God has paid and you can't pay. So, if you think you can pay, this Cup of Grace will burn.

If you're full of yourself – proud of yourself – you'll have  
a very hard time with this table  
a very hard time with Christmas  
and a very hard time with the Judgment of God.

If on the other hand, you feel empty...  
if you feel "poor in spirit" – well "blessed are you"  
if you're mourning and meek and hungry and thirsty for righteousness  
because you feel empty of righteousness – "blessed are you."  
If you feel like old, weathered wood held together with rusty nails  
like a forgotten manger, where animals feed  
like an old manger, out back behind a resort hotel  
where the world parties – well "blessed are you."

You are the place where the Christ is born.  
You have been emptied, that you might be full forever...  
Let's open the door and invite Him in.

Whoever you are – pray this prayer with me:

*God I believe and I don't believe. Please help my unbelief. I confess I've been full of myself and full of my judgments – trying to justify myself.  
But on Christmas Eve I surrender myself and my judgments to your Judgment – Jesus  
Jesus you can have my room  
Be born in me this night.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Have a very Merry Christmas.