

Sermon Notes and Discussion Questions
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Sermon Title: “Make Room” – Luke 2:6-7
Sunday, December 23, 2018
Pastor Howard T. Washington

Jonathon McReynold’s recent album release and tour was titled *Make Room*. He also wrote a book and is doing a book signing tour to promote his book titled, *Make Room: Finding Where Faith Fits*.

Jonathon McReynolds quotes in the book: “The health of our souls, the trajectory of our lives, and the benefit of our faith depend on our willingness to make room for God.”

Over two thousand years ago, Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem where they could not find anyone who would make room for Jesus. Perhaps they had traveled too slowly and what they thought would not be difficult ended up very challenging because all of the homes that provided temporary lodging were filled up.

Today, we struggle to make room for Jesus. We have overcrowded our lives with so many things. Our hearts, minds and time are filled up with everything else. Will you make room for Jesus? That is our challenge.

One commentary suggests: “There was no room for them in the inn not because the innkeeper was cruel or inhospitable, but because the inn was already overcrowded. There are hearts that have never welcomed Jesus, and this is not because they hate Him but simply because these hearts are already so overcrowded with thoughts of riches, honor, prestige, pleasures, business affairs, etc., that they have no room for Jesus, no time to reflect on His will, no desire to go out of their way to do his pleasure.”¹

We believe, but our time is overcrowded. We may set aside a few hours for church on Sunday. The difficult part is during the week. Jesus is knocking and saying, “Could you just let me in?”

Unfortunately, many of us still have overcrowded homes and overcrowded hearts.

Every Christian knows that our job is to make room for Jesus to have permanent residence in our heart. The struggle is that the distractions of life make it hard to stay focused on the most important thing.

Sermon In a sentence: Making Room for God requires intentional space for God to dwell in all areas of our lives.

Illustration: We grew up with Sunday clothes—Sunday suit, clip-on tie and Sunday shoes. Some of us have a church personality—we only see this person when we are in church. We make room for Jesus when we put on our Sunday clothes. On Monday, I might have some jeans on. God is saying to us today, we must make intentional space so that God will reside through all of our lives.

Solomon said these words, Proverbs 3:5-6 – “Trust in the Lord will all you heart and lean not to your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path.” How do you make room for God?

¹ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, vol. 11, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 146.

A. Make Room for God in my Heart

Make room for God when you put him first — Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. Then love your neighbor as you love yourself. This is the great commandment. This is the importance of personal consecration.

Romans 6:13 (ESV) — 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

If we belong to God, He should not be competing with everything else in our lives.

Romans 12:1 (ESV) — 1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

We are renting space out in our lives and in our hearts to other things. If we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice and we never make time or surrender our service to Him, we never really make room because we have given parts of our hearts and lives to other things. We did not even ask God about where we spend our time. We just decide to do it because it makes us look good or it seems right or nice to us. God is then in a place of competing with our other interests.

B. Make Room for God in my Head

Part of the struggle is changing our thinking.

Romans 12:2 (NKJV)

¹²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

What you think is what you are. If you think negatively, that is what you will become. If you believe what the word of God says about who you are, you will be transformed by the renewing of your mind. If your thoughts hurt, ask God to change them.

Philippians 4:8 (NASB95) - ⁸Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

When the enemy tries to remind you of something in your past, remind him of his future. There is so much freedom in lying in our current culture. When you know the truth from the Word of God, that will set you free. Stop repeating and listening to the lies. Lord, help me to be able to discern what is the truth so that I think on those things that are true and honest.

1. Refresh your priorities - Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all of these things will be added. Sometimes our priorities are not aligned with God. Connect your priorities to the will of God for your life.

2. Define your values:
 - Honor God in everything we do
 - Build relationships based on trust and respect
 - Maintain integrity and excellence in service.
 - Practice responsible stewardship.
 - Give God credit for all accomplishments.
 - Give God our cares and problems. When I am struggling with something, I go straight to God. Cast your cares on Him. He cares for you. If he allows it, He will walk you through it. There is nothing that is a surprise to God. It may have been a surprise to you. Ask him how to deal with your circumstances. Help me.
 - o Ask God for His will and direction rather than telling him what we want
 - o The enemy will try to convince you that God does not care about you because He did not do what you “told” Him to do.
 - o Make room for Him. He is doing something in your life. Do not shut Him out now. Make room for His presence. Seek his presence when worshipping, studying and praying together with other believers

C. Making Room for God in my Habits

Let God help us with our habits. There are some habits we enjoy. Make room for God so your Christmas can be blessed.

There are key habits that indicate you are making room for Jesus.

1. **Solitude:** Be Still and Know that I am God. Psalm 46:10
Quiet time with God. Listening for His voice. Giving God opportunity to speak into your life and into your situations. Go and sit down. Some of us are signed up for too much. Spend some time with God. God has not jumped off the throne.
2. **Prayer:** Pray about everything. Pray when you feel like it and when you don't feel like it. Worry about nothing. Phil. 4:6-7. We go through seasons when we need somebody to pray for us. Somebody to call my name to Jesus. Will someone stand in the gap and hold me and let me know that God's got it? Pray without ceasing. Acknowledge God's presence in all that you are doing.
3. **Study the Word of God**

When you make room for God, you recognize and receive His love.

Question: What do I need to move over to make room for God? Are you willing to move something out? Whatever it is, now is the time to get the courage to say, “God it is OK to move that out of the way.” Jesus said in the garden, “Not my will, but your will be done.” Put your finger on what is keeping you from giving God your best. What is keeping you from going deeper in your relationship with God? What is keeping you from understanding the love of God? Nothing can separate you from the love of God. If you have put barriers up, it is time to say God, you can remove that barrier. Is it your ego, your arrogant attitude? You have got to be willing to remove it. Is it anger? Is it idols? Your schedule? God is not obliged to work himself between all of our things.

Why do you need to make room for God? Jesus made room for you. He emptied himself out by taking the form of a slave for you. Phil 2:5-11. He was on the throne with God. He decided to make room and emptied himself out and went to the cross. There is room at the cross. There is room for you at the cross. Jesus shed His blood on Calvary. God will help you identify what is in the way. Have the courage to say to God, "Move it out of the way." He moved himself out of the way for me. In humility, He came. What do you need to empty? What is choking you, chained up, tied down? There are some things that have to be moved to be close to God—relationships, strongholds, addictions...

Speak this confession: "I will make room for God."

Discussion Questions and Personal Reflection:

1. What are some examples of things you can identify that can be barriers to "making more room" for God in our lives?
2. Read Philippians 2:5-11. What does Jesus' example teach us about "making room" for God in our lives?
3. What habits will you start or do more of in order to make more room for God in your life?
4. What are your values? How do they compare with the values in this sermon? What values will you incorporate into your personal/family values?
5. Personal Reflection: What do you need to move over to make room for God? What is keeping you from giving God your best? Ask God to reveal to you what needs to be moved over in your life.