

Sermon: No One Left Behind**Scripture: Matthew 1:15-22****Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: December 28, 2025**

Do you know why it's so important that God came at Christmas in such a lowly fashion? As a vulnerable baby, of poor parents, to an occupied people, as refugee from political violence... as a wandering homeless man followed around by fishermen, tax collectors, prostitutes and died as a criminal on a cross? It's very simple actually, the answer to that question of why God incarnated so lowly instead of dramatically with pomp and circumstance, with great power and great immediate consequence.

It was in order to leave no one out.

We have a hard time getting that simple concept that God leaves no one out... or maybe we just don't want to get it. Because there are people that most all of us would rather leave out, isn't there, if we are honest? They are not one of us, they don't believe the right things, they don't love the right people, they don't look like we do or are not as good and righteous as we are. Jesus himself in no uncertain terms, we see throughout the gospels, did not operate like that and in fact challenged and exclusionary spirit within hearts at every turn he could find.

The Christian faith and Christmas and what Jesus exemplified in so many ways, and in the end died doing, makes clear that God came so lowly, so humbly, so defeated even, that no one could be left out. No one could be left behind. It's ironic that by far the best selling series of Christian novels is entitled what? Left Behind. We eat that stuff up! There's no doubt that there's some suggestion of the rapture where some are taken and

saved and others left to their condemnation, but it is scant in the Bible. Here's a better image for you from the Christian British writer of the mid-20th century CS Lewis. Listen to this way of imaging what God did in Jesus:

In the Christian story God descends to reascend. He comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity; down further still, in the womb, down to the roots and seabed of nature He created. But he goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with him.

One has the picture of a strong man stooping lower and lower to get himself underneath some great complicated burden. He must stoop in order to lift, he must almost disappear under the load before he incredibly straightens his back and marches off with the whole mass swaying on his shoulders.

Human power comes not in humility and smallness but as big and proud as possible. We come with power in our religion itself trying hard to make it more and more respectable and serious and grand and dignified, but that's the thing. It wasn't respectable and serious and grand and dignified, in the first place. It was quite the opposite. And if you make it those things then you necessarily being leaving people out, you know: we are respectable here and have no room for the disreputable! We are serious here and have no room for the silly. We are grand here and have no room for the insignificant or the trivial. We are intelligent here and have no room for the uneducated. We are dignified here and we have no room for the undignified. And though it might be hard to hear, I think there's truth in the suggestion that in many of our respectable religious institutions there would be no room for Jesus himself. The no room-in-the-inn part of the

Christmas story becomes no room in his home town or his synagogue and eventually the world. No room for you here.

The one who comes leaving no one out is left out. And out there He calls us to follow him and leave no one out. Jesus still stands at the door and knocks. Will we hear his voice and let him in. Well, how will I know it's Jesus. He tells us in no uncertain terms. When you care for the least of these my children you care for me. When you open your door to the least of these my children, you open your door to me. When you make room for those you least want to make room for, you make room for me.

In this Christmas season and into the new year, let's make room for Jesus in our hearts and be clear that that means no one is left behind.