



Pastor's Page ***"Inn Side Story"***

It was getting close to Christmas and all the usual activities were taking place. A small group of us headed off to a local residential home to sing carols and remind the dear people living there the real 'reason for the season'. At about 7.00pm our little carol concert was over and following some mince pies and cheery chat we headed off to our next venue - a local pub. For reasons I don't remember (I was probably busy signing autographs or something!!) the others went before me, leaving me to travel alone in my car. As I manoeuvred out of the parking spot at the rear of the residential home my simple intentions came to a grinding halt at the presence of a massive iron gate in front of me. I got out of the car and attempted to open the thing but to no avail, it was firmly locked! I then decided to knock on the back door to try and attract someone's attention - no reply! I couldn't get to the front door because of the gate so I even tried knocking on the window risking the cardiac arrest of a few guests! Still no-one heard me! I could see all the residents inside, drinking their cocoa and watching TV as the staff attended to their needs and here was I trapped in the car park! Time was moving on and I was supposed to be at the pub now leading more carol singing and I was desperately running out of ideas as to how to escape! Fortunately I had my mobile phone with me so decided to ring a church member who lived fairly near to the home. She was in, and following some stifled sniggering, she sprang into action! She arrived at the home 5 minutes later, rang the front door bell, explained the situation to the manageress who came out with the gate key and rescued me!! It was a humbling experience but one in which I was so grateful to this faithful church member for her help. Without her I may still have been trapped in that Old Folks home today!

Two thousand years ago Jesus came to earth to rescue us from the grip of Satan and sin and save us from ourselves. I'm so grateful that he did. As the old hymn says; *"There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin*

He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in"

And Jesus 'unlocked that gate of heaven' by coming amongst us, becoming one of us and eventually dying for us. His birth at Bethlehem was when it all began on the human stage. That was the moment that the creator of the universe humbled himself and became a tiny baby. Right from the start he identified with the outcast, with the poor with those who had nothing. Jesus in fact may well have been born, not in a stable, but in the open air? One theory is that he was born in the courtyard of the inn, that being the most likely place for a manger to reside. It is only a theory but if true, it further underlines the fact that Jesus strongly identifies with those on the "outside" Sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes (even shepherds) were people on the "outside" people rejected by the society in which they lived, rejected by those who also rejected Jesus himself crucifying him "outside" the city walls. Jesus was rejected by men in order that we could be accepted by God.

So what about us? Will we leave Jesus outside of our lives, still in the manger at Bethlehem, or will we invite him in to our lives to change us from the inside out?

16th December 2007