When I Say There Is No Room

The Innkeeper in Bethlehem

“For nothing will be impossible with God.”
— Luke 1:37

There is a tiny detail in the Christmas story that I have probably overlooked more times than I can count.

There was no room.

That's it.

No room.

Mary was about to give birth to Jesus, and there was no room available for them in the guest room.

And somehow, that little phrase has always felt bigger to me than it should.

Because I know what it feels like to have no room.

No room in my heart for another disappointment.

No room in my mind for another possibility.

No room in my life for one more thing.

No room for hope because hope feels dangerous when I've already been hurt.

Sometimes I don't say, “No room.”

I say,

“No way.”

And those two things can become dangerously similar.

There is no room for this.

There is no way this can change.

There is no way that person will ever change.

There is no way I will ever feel normal again.

There is no way I can get through this.

There is no way God can bring anything good out of this.

No way.

I've said it.

Maybe you have too.

My “No Way” List

If I'm honest, I have a list.

Maybe you do too.

People I have decided will never understand.

Situations I have decided will never change.

Relationships I have decided are too broken.

Prayers I've decided are probably never going to be answered the way I hoped.

Wounds I've decided are simply going to be part of me forever.

Things I've lost that I don't believe can ever be replaced.

Dreams I've stopped dreaming because disappointment taught me to expect less.

And then there are the things I believe about myself.

I'll always struggle with this.

I'll never get past that.

I'm just too broken.

I've made too many mistakes.

It's too late for me.

We can build some pretty impressive walls with the words “no way.”

And the strange thing is, sometimes those walls feel like protection.

If I don't hope, I can't be disappointed.

If I don't expect anything, I can't be hurt.

If I decide nothing will change, then I don't have to risk believing that it might.

But there is a problem with living that way.

I may protect myself from disappointment.

But I can also protect myself from hope.

Bethlehem Reminds Me to Look Again

Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, and there wasn't a comfortable place waiting for them.

The circumstances weren't ideal.

Nothing about the scene looked like what I would expect when God was about to do something extraordinary.

There was no royal nursery.

No palace.

No room prepared for the King.

There was a manger.

And yet Jesus came anyway.

God wasn't stopped by the lack of room.

He wasn't limited by the surroundings.

He wasn't waiting for perfect conditions.

He was accomplishing His purpose in the middle of circumstances that looked completely ordinary.

And maybe that's the part I need to remember.

God does not need my circumstances to look perfect before He can work.

I keep thinking I need everything to be different before God can do something new.

I need to be stronger.

I need to feel better.

I need the situation to change.

I need that person to change.

I need my grief to disappear.

I need to understand what God is doing.

But what if God isn't waiting for all of that?

What if He wants to meet me right in the middle of it?

What if the place I keep calling impossible is exactly where He wants to show me that He is still God?

When Grief Says “No More”

This becomes especially real when we talk about loss.

Because grief has a way of shrinking our vision.

When someone we love is gone, the future can suddenly look very different.

Christmas can feel different.

Birthdays can feel different.

Family gatherings can feel different.

Even ordinary days can feel different.

There is an empty space that wasn't there before.

And sometimes we look at that empty space and think,

“Nothing will ever fill this.”

And maybe that's true in one sense.

We don't replace people.

We don't erase loss.

We don't pretend something didn't happen.

But God can still bring something new into a life that has been permanently changed.

He can bring comfort without erasing the memory.

He can bring joy without diminishing the grief.

He can bring purpose out of pain.

He can teach us how to live in a life we never would have chosen.

He can be present in the empty spaces.

And sometimes that's the miracle.

Not that God gives me back exactly what I lost.

But that He proves He can still be God after the loss.

What Have I Decided God Can't Do?

This is where the story becomes a mirror.

Not a mirror that asks me whether I have enough faith.

A mirror that asks me to be honest.

What have I already decided God cannot do?

Who have I written off?

What situation have I labeled hopeless?

What part of my life have I locked away and told God,

“You can't touch this”?

What prayer have I stopped praying?

What dream have I stopped allowing myself to consider?

What have I called impossible simply because I cannot see how it could happen?

Because there is a difference between saying,

“I don't know how this can happen,”

and saying,

“This can never happen.”

The first one admits my limitations.

The second one can sometimes forget God's.

I don't have to understand how God will work.

I don't even have to know whether He will answer the way I want.

But I can leave room for Him.

I can say,

“Lord, I don't see a way. But I'm not going to tell You there isn't one.”

That's faith.

Not certainty about the outcome.

Trust in the One who holds the outcome.

God Doesn't Need More Room

Maybe I've spent too much time worrying about whether I have enough room for God.

Maybe I need to remember that God has never struggled to find room.

He came into a manger.

He entered a broken world.

He stepped into human suffering.

He went to a cross.

He walked into a grave.

And then He walked out of it.

Think about that.

Humanity looked at death and saw the end.

God looked at death and made it the doorway to resurrection.

Humanity said,

“No way.”

God said,

“Watch Me.”

The cross looked like defeat.

The grave looked final.

But neither was the end.

So when I look at my own circumstances and think,

There is no way,

I need to remember the empty tomb.

Because the God who brought Jesus out of the grave is not intimidated by my impossible situation.

Look in the Mirror

Maybe today my prayer doesn't need to be,

“God, fix everything.”

Maybe it needs to be,

“God, help me stop deciding what You can't do.”

Help me make room for hope.

Make room for possibility.

Make room for healing.

Make room for whatever You want to do.

That doesn't mean I ignore reality.

It doesn't mean I pretend everything is okay.

It doesn't mean I stop grieving.

It means I refuse to let my circumstances become bigger than my God.

I can grieve and still hope.

I can hurt and still trust.

I can admit that something is impossible for me and still believe that nothing is impossible for God.

Maybe that's what living beyond the “no” looks like.

Not knowing what God will do.

Just refusing to tell Him what He can't do.

Carry This With You

I may not see a way, but God does. I may not understand what He is doing, but I can trust who He is. My circumstances do not get to decide what is possible for God.

So I'm taking my “no way” list to Him.

Every name.

Every wound.

Every fear.

Every impossible situation.

And instead of saying,

“There is no way,”

I'm going to say,

“God, I don't see the way. But I know You are the Way.”

Prayer

Father,

You know my list.

You know the things I've quietly labeled impossible.

You know the people I've given up on.

You know the situations I've stopped praying about.

You know the places where disappointment has made me afraid to hope again.

You know the grief that has changed the way I see tomorrow.

And You know how easy it is for me to look at what I can see and decide that it is all there is.

Forgive me.

Forgive me for making my circumstances bigger than You.

Forgive me for assuming that because I cannot see a way, there must not be one.

Lord, I don't want to live that way anymore.

I don't want to deny reality.

I don't want to pretend that painful things aren't painful.

But I also don't want to forget that You are bigger than anything I'm facing.

So I'm giving You my “no way” list.

I give You the people.

The circumstances.

The losses.

The disappointments.

The things I don't understand.

The things I cannot fix.

And I'm asking You to do something in me before You ever do anything around me.

Give me eyes to see beyond what I can see.

Give me faith when I don't have answers.

Give me hope when hope feels risky.

Give me peace when I cannot control the outcome.

And when I find myself saying,

“There is no way,”

gently remind me:

“Nothing is impossible with Me.”

Thank You for Jesus.

Thank You that You came into a world that was already broken.

Thank You that You didn't wait for perfect circumstances.

Thank You for the cross.

Thank You for the empty tomb.

Thank You that what looked like the end was not the end.

So today, Lord, I leave the door open.

I make room.

And I trust You with whatever comes through it.

Amen.