

TREASURE HUNT  
**The Location of the Treasure**  
Luke 2:4-7

There is something about us that loves a good treasure hunt. We want to believe that out there somewhere there really is an ultimate treasure we could find, and what I want to ask you this holiday season is this: **what if there really were just such a treasure?** Are we willing to accept the challenge of searching for it? The more I thought about it and the more I prayed about it, the more convinced I became that this year at Ryot, we need to go on a treasure hunt. We need to go hunting for **the real treasure of the season**. Because we believe that there is a real treasure to Christmas. It is one that originates with the very first Christmas, but one that so many people miss each year, because they don't hunt for it. So this year, I have decided to go on a treasure hunt to discover that treasure. Now, to make things more interesting, I've actually hidden a real treasure somewhere in our church. No, it's not a chest of gold, but it is a real treasure. For example, you will find in that treasure a gift certificate for a Sunday dinner with Christy and me. There is also a \$25 gift certificate to the mall in Altoona. A gift certificate good for one free snow shoveling of your home, and a \$25 gift certificate for gasoline; among a couple of other things. **Anybody interested in a little treasure hunting?**

I said last week that for the next few Sundays of Christmas, you will have the opportunity to procure one piece of our treasure map. You will need all four pieces of the map in order to decipher the clues that will lead you to the hidden treasure. Last week, you received the first of the clues. How many of you managed to find it? Well, there are still enough copies of that piece of the map still hidden in that same location for those who are interested. I was excited to hear how a number of our young people (and not so young people) have already been looking all over the church building for the hidden treasure. They don't have all of the pieces of the map, but they are still trying to find the location of the treasure. I will remind you that you will need all four pieces of the map in order to identify the location of the treasure.

Now, the only reason we are doing this treasure hunt is to get us thinking about and focusing on the real treasure of the season; because we are absolutely convinced that there is a real treasure to the season. But we are going to have to hunt for it if we hope to find it this year. If you follow the clues from last week; It's found in Mt. 1:22-23, and the clues on that map told us: look for something that can take care of you like nothing else can. Look for something that can encourage you like nothing else can. And look for something that can touch you like nothing else can. Follow those clues and you will discover that the real treasure of the season is not a something, but a someone! And that someone is Jesus. Well, that brings us to this week and our second clue as to the real treasure of the season and that clue is this: **the location of the treasure**. The ability to identify the location of a treasure is critical. We may have the map of the real treasure of the season. We looked at that map last week, but can we identify the location of that treasure even if we followed that map? I think we need to spend some time looking at what we can discover about that location of the treasure. It is described quite clearly in a report on the real treasure of the season found in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2. Here's what that report says, *“Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”* (Lk 2:4-7)...Prayer

Let me share with you today the **two critical factors in identifying the location of the real treasure of the season**.

1) The treasure is located **in the most unlikely of places**.

Listen again to the description of where the real treasure of the season, Jesus, was to be located that first Christmas. This is the NLT of Lk 2:7, *“She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.”* (Lk 2:7) See that part here that says, she laid him in a manger. I realize that we have heard those words so many times, they are such familiar words, that frankly they don't mean much to us. But if you are not careful here, you will not be able to identify the location of the real treasure of the season. The writer Luke used a very particular word for that location. It is the word that we typically translate, "manger." It referred to either the feeding trough for the animals or the feeding stall where the animals were fed, which many times was a cave.

And so, as best as we can understand, when the Christ child was born, he was laid to rest with the animals, in a feeding trough; possibly in a cave. Now, folks that was an unlikely place. It was an unlikely place **for a newborn to be placed...**It was an unlikely place for **a royal child to be placed...** This child was the "king of the Jews." We expect a prince to be born in a palace. It was an unlikely place for **the son of God to appear...** One of the reason that so many of the Jews struggled to accept Jesus as the messiah was because they couldn't believe that any self-respecting messiah could be born in a manger, and so they missed their messiah! Be careful when you go looking for the location of the real treasure of the season; you might just miss it because it is located in the most unlikely of places. So, what's the point? The point is that if you want to encounter Jesus this season, you had better remember that God always does things in the most unlikely of places. *I heard about a middle-aged woman who posted her Christmas wish list on the refrigerator. She figured that was a location where her husband definitely would find it.*

*Now, rather than list certain items of desire, she simply requested "something that will make me look attractive and beautiful."*

*When Christmas rolled around she expected to open a package with some fancy jewelry or clothing inside. To her surprise, he gave her an Exercise Bike instead.*

It wasn't what she expected! What's the point? The point is that if you hope to encounter the real treasure of the season, be careful where you look, because God does his best work in the most unlikely of places. Because of this fact I want to draw your attention to a couple critical facts that you need to know:

a) First we have to know that **God does things on his terms and not mine.** Do you remember what God said through the Prophet Isaiah in Is 55:8, *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."* (Is 55:8-9) What's does that mean? That means that God does things on his terms and not ours. We want God to do things on our terms, and I think that's why we fail to encounter him Christmas after Christmas. I think that's why we can go through most Christmases and never experience God's treasured work in our lives. Simply because God's treasure is found in the most unlikely of places, places where God does things on his terms and not mine. *I remember reading about a lady who criticized D. L. Moody one day for his methods of Evangelism in attempting to win people to the Lord.*

*"I don't like the way you do things," she said. Moody's reply was "I agree with you. I don't like the way I do it either. Tell me, how do you do it?"*

*The lady replied, "I don't do it." Moody retorted, "Then I like my way of doing it better than your way of not doing it."*

We tend to want God to do things on our terms. And that is exactly why we go through most Christmases and never experience God's treasured work in our lives, because God's treasure is found in the most unlikely of places. Places where God does things on his terms and not mine.

b) And if I ever hope to encounter Him, then I need to recognize that fact. I also need to recognize that **God does things on his time and not mine.** David who wrote so many of the psalms understood this when he wrote: *My times are in your hands.* (Ps 31:15) Anybody besides me ever given God a time schedule to keep in your life? Maybe the reason we go through so many seasons and do not experience God's treasured work in our lives is because we look for God to do things on our time schedule. Know this about God's timing: It's always the right time. God always does his best work in the most unlikely of places. And if I ever hope to experience that work and discover that treasure then I had better be patient and allow God to do things in his timing and not force my timing. *The story is told of a man who rushed into a suburban railroad station one morning and, almost breathlessly, asked the ticket agent: "When does the 8:01 train leave?"*

*"At 8:01," was the answer. "Well," the man replied, "it is 7:59 by my watch, 7:57 by the town clock, and 8:04 by the station clock. Which time am I to go by?"*

*"You can go by any clock you wish," said the agent, "but you cannot go by the 8:01 train, for it has already left."*

God's time is just that, God's time! When it comes to the location of the treasures of God's greatest work, remember God always does his best work in the most unlikely of places. So if you hope to encounter that treasure this season, you had better put yourself to the task of hunting for it. But remember: Don't look for God to do things on your terms or in your time, because God always shows up in the most unlikely of places.

2) Then notice that this treasure is located in the **most available of places**.

Now, listen again to Luke 2:7, *"She gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."* (Lk 2:7) See those words there: there was no room for them in the inn. Those are pretty important words. Jesus was born in a manger not only because God does his best work in the most unlikely of places; but also because God does his best work in the most available of places. They laid him in the manger because there wasn't any room for him in the inn. *We've all seen the children's pageant renditions of the Inn, but sometimes I wonder how close we ever come to what the inn was really like. In a backwater town like Bethlehem, it wouldn't have been very elaborate. Trust me, there was no Star Plaza hotel!*

Some towns had inns that were run by innkeepers. (The good Samaritan took the man who was beaten by robbers to such an inn. Gave money to the innkeeper to take care of him) Some towns simply had a "town home" - a city building available for travelers. In some towns, the people would build "guest rooms" on their houses. There was always a place for travelers because the Jewish people were taught that it was a holy thing to house a traveler. They truly believed that "Sometimes you will welcome angels unaware." It was an expectation; and in some places it was a law. And yet in Bethlehem, there wasn't any place in the Inn for Joseph and Mary. Maybe it was the excessive number of visitors because of the registration. Maybe it was late and the innkeeper just didn't want to get up. Maybe it was some other reason. For whatever reason, Jesus was born in a manger because there wasn't any room in the inn. The manger was the only thing available, and so the real treasure of the season ended up being located in the place that was most available that night.

What's the point? The point is that if you are not careful, you may very well miss the location of the real treasure of the season, because that treasure is only to be found in places that are open to Him. Maybe, just maybe the reason so many of us can go through an entire Christmas season without a fresh encounter with Jesus is because **there isn't any room in our lives?**... So what's the answer? How do we make room for the real treasure of the season? What must we do to keep from missing him this year because of that? Well, let me make **two suggestions**.

**a) Clearly identify what keeps you from making room for Jesus.** I have found that there are typically 3 common reasons why Jesus finds no room in our lives.

- **Our busyness**, anybody here not busy? Our culture lives at the red line. *I remember hearing about one woman in the rush of last-minute Christmas shopping who bought a box of 50 identical greeting cards. Without bothering to read the verse, she hastily signed and addressed all but one of them.*

*Several days after they had been mailed, she came across the one card which hadn't been sent, and she looked at the message she had sent. She was horrified to read: "This card is just to say . . . a little gift is on the way."*

Busyness gets us into trouble all of the time. It also keeps us from encountering the real treasure of the season.

- **Our burdens**, sometimes, it's not the fact that we don't make time for Jesus. It's the fact that the problems and pains and pressures of our lives just squeeze Jesus out. Have you ever been so overwhelmed that you were incapable of experiencing God's presence? God only comes and dwells in available places, and sometimes the reason that we don't have any room in our lives is because our lives are so very full of burdens.

What are the things you always associate with Christmas? One of the things I always associate with Christmas is "funerals." I don't mean to be morbid, but it's true. Because one of the ministries God has allowed me the privilege to perform is to care for families in the time of death, I performed more than just a few funerals. And every year around the holidays I take time to pray and think about all those families and friends who have lost loved ones. Now why do I tell you such morbid things? So you will understand what I mean when I say Christmas and burdens can go hand in hand. But our burdens in life can easily make it to where there is no room in our lives for Jesus.

- **Our bent**, now what do I mean by that? Our busyness and our burdens can occupy a tremendous amount of our lives, right? Well, tell me this: What do you do with what's left over after that busyness and burden?

What do you do with that part of your life that hasn't been consumed? What I find is that most of us spend that part "on ourselves." True?... Can we just admit it? It's easy to fill our lives with so many things - even as believers - that there simply isn't any room for Jesus; at Christmas or any other time of the year. No wonder we don't recognize the location of the treasure of the season when we see it. No wonder we can go through a Christmas season and not encounter Jesus in a fresh or new way. So what's the answer?

Well, that's the other suggestion I would like to make to you. If you hope to locate the real treasure of the season this Christmas, then not only must you clearly identify what keeps you from making room for Jesus, you must also **carefully embrace what enables you to make room for Jesus**. And how do you do that, a couple things:

- First you **Cultivate hungriness**. You have to work it. You have to prioritize it. You have to go out of your way to hunt for it. *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."* (Mt 5:6) You have to want it - I mean really want - it in order to get it. *I remember hearing about a little boy who wanted a watch for Christmas. Day after day he begged his parents about getting a watch. His parents did not see the real need and tried to ignore their son's requests. The boy's obsession became so great that the father finally forbade him to say another word about the watch.*

*Christmas was approaching, and the boy knew that his opportunity for getting a watch depended on immediate action. But he also knew that his father had forbade him from bothering his parents about his desire for a watch. This would take some creativity.*

*The boy's family had a tradition of learning a verse every week and reciting it for the family at the end of the week. The boy carefully considered his choice of a verse and practiced it throughout the week.*

*At the time of recitation, he recited his verse without flaw: "What I say unto you I say unto you all, watch!"*

The boy got his watch. I guess if you want it that badly... Well, most of us the reason we do not locate the real treasure of the season is because we don't want it enough. Seek him and you will find him when you seek him with all your heart!

- Next you **Cultivate Humbleness**. *"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."* (Jas 4:10) There is something about humbleness that we have lost or maybe we never had it. **It is only when I realize that I have no hope of ever seeing Jesus that I will ever see Jesus**. Jesus only appears in available places, and what makes them available is that they are empty of all pride and self-seeking. They are humble places, but when Jesus finds such a place, he fills it with his powerful presence. *Well, let me tell you one more Christmas story. It's one of my favorite Christmas stories. It's about a boy named Wallace Purling.*

*Wally was nine and in the second grade, though he should have been in the fourth. Most people in town knew that he had difficulty in keeping up. He was big and clumsy, slow in movement and mind.*

*Still, Wally was well liked by the other children in his class, all of whom were smaller than he, though the boys had trouble hiding their irritation when Wally would ask to play ball with them or any game, for that matter, in which winning was important.*

*Most often they'd find a way to keep him out, but Wally would hang around anyway - not sulking, just hoping. He was always a helpful boy, a willing and smiling one, and the natural protector, paradoxically, of the underdog. If the older boys chased the younger ones away, it would always be Wally who'd say, "Can't they stay? They're no bother."*

*Wally fancied the idea of being a shepherd in the Christmas pageant that year, but the play's director, Miss Lumbard, assigned him to a more important role. After all, she reasoned, the Innkeeper did not have too many lines, and Wally's size would make his refusal of lodging to Joseph even more forceful.*

*And so it happened that the unusually large, partisan audience gathered for the town's yearly extravaganza of crooks and crèches, of beards, crowns, halos, and a whole stage full of squeaky voices.*

*No one on stage or off was more caught up in the magic of the night than Wally Purling. They said later that he stood in the wings and watched the performance with such fascination that from time to time Miss Lumbard had to make sure he didn't wander out onstage before his cue.*

*Then the time came when Joseph appeared, slowly, tenderly guiding Mary to the door of the inn. Joseph knocked hard on the wooden door set into the painted backdrop. Wally the innkeeper was there, waiting.*

*"What do you want," said Wally, swinging the door open with a brusque gesture.*

*"We seek lodging."*

*"Seek it elsewhere." Wally looked straight ahead but spoke vigorously. "The inn is full."*

*"Sir, we have asked everywhere in vain. We have traveled far and are very weary." "There is no room in the inn for you." Wally looked properly stern.*

*"Please, good innkeeper, this is my wife, Mary. She is heavy with child and needs a place to rest. Surely you must have some small corner for her. She is so tired."*

*Now, for the first time, the Innkeeper relaxed his stiff stance and looked down at Mary. With that, there was along pause, long enough to make the audience a bit tense with embarrassment. And long enough for the director to prompt him with his line: "No! Be gone!" "No!" Wally repeated automatically. "Be gone!"*

*Joseph sadly placed his arm around Mary and Mary laid her head upon her husband's shoulder and the two of them started to move away.*

*The Innkeeper did not return inside his inn, however. Wally stood there in the doorway, watching the forlorn couple. His mouth was open, his brow creased with concern, his eyes filling unmistakably with tears. And suddenly this Christmas pageant became different from all others.*

*"Don't go, Joseph," Wally called out. And then with a bright smile he said, "Bring Mary back. You can have my room."*

A few people thought that the pageant had been ruined, but most considered it the most Christmas of all Christmas pageants they had ever seen. Do you want to locate the real treasure of the season? Then make sure that you make an available place in your life. And then expect Jesus to show up in the most unlikely of ways!

## TREASURE HUNT

### The Location of the Treasure

Luke 2:4-7

#### **Hunting for the Real Treasure of the Season:**

- 1) The Map of the Treasure - Mat. 1:23
- 2) The Location of the Treasure - Luk. 2:7

#### **Two Critical Factors in identifying The Location of the Real Treasure of the Season:**

##### **#1: The Treasure Is Located In The Most Unlikely Of Places.**

*She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them. (Lk 2:7)*

##### **Two Critical Facts:**

###### **1) God does things on His terms and not mine.**

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Is 55:8-9)*

###### **2) God does things on His time and not mine.**

*My times are in your hands. (Ps 31:15)*

##### **#2: The Treasure Is Located In The Most Available Of Places.**

*She gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Lk 2:7)*

##### **Two Critical Suggestions:**

###### **1) Clearly identify what keeps you from making room for Jesus.**

a) Our Busyness.

b) Our Burdens.

c) Our Bent.

###### **2) Clearly embrace what enables you to make room for Jesus.**

a) Cultivate hungriness.

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. (Mt 5:6)*

b) Cultivate humbleness.

*Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. (Jas 4:10)*

### **Will You Find The Location Of The Treasure?**