

God's Hotel ...

is a song written by Aussie singer song writers Paul Kelly and Nick Cave. The opening line to a shang of steel guitar says, "Everybody's got a room in God's Hotel. Never see a sign hanging on the door saying no vacancies here no more." These lyrics capture the implication of our reading from Luke's gospel.

Mary and Joseph had travelled far, Mary, nine months pregnant with her first child. Young, still a child herself, away from her mother and all that might have given her comfort and confidence, they tumble into Bethlehem late in the evening, so late in fact that all the rooms in the town are taken. What Mary and Joseph would have done to have seen a sign like the one in Kelly and Cave's song, hanging outside that hotel.

Instead, they were met with, "no room at the inn."

While these words are never spoken again in the gospel, it's a reoccurring theme. It happens over and over and over. In fact, some say this is the theme of the gospel of Luke; that the religion of Israel has become so narrow, there is no room at the inn. No room for the rough and ready Shepherds. No room for John the Baptist. No room for Jesus returning to Nazareth. No room for the man with the unclean spirit.

No room for the Leper, the paralytic, the tax collector. No room for the disciples, the man with the withered hand, for the crowds who come scrabbling and seeking. No room for the Roman Centurion, the widow's son, or the sinful woman.

It continues with the women who follow Jesus, the girl restored and a hemorrhaging Syrophenician woman. All told, "no room here."

It's a theme in Luke; that the religion of Israel has made it impossible to find a place in God's Hotel. Luke's message is that Jesus is not like this, he is the embodiment of the opposite, "Everybody's got a room here. The door is always open, the vacancy sign, always out."

You would think, that once Jesus had accomplished his mission, got his followers in place and the fellowship of Jesus had begun, that things would be different ...

It didn't take long, for the church to hang out that same sign, "no room here."

No room for the Jews. Women. Children. Minority ethnic groups and cultures. To those who wanted to be in ministry and married. To those who wanted to be in ministry and women. To those who wanted to live, read and believe the bible. To these for centuries, it was said again and again and again, no room at the inn!

You would imagine, after all these years, things might have changed. After two thousand years hearing the story of a tiny, young, pregnant Mary and her worried sick husband Joseph, we might have learnt that "no room at the inn," is not an option any more ... but we haven't.

For women in many of the world's largest denominations, no room at the inn. For gay, lesbian and trans gender communities, no room at the inn.

For divorced and separated couples, for the unbaptized, those with wayward children, no room at the inn. For those who are not like us, "no room at the inn."

You would think we might have learnt,
that the one we follow,
the one we say we love,
the one who we say loves us, to the point of death and beyond,

would have taught us something, something a couple Aussie singer songwriter's get right first time.

That everybody's got a room in God's Hotel.

The door is always open.

Everybody's welcome.

And the vacancy sign always out.

Folks, God's Hotel is open for business and there is room for all.

Merry Christmas.