

**“From the Cradle to the Cross”:**  
*The First Advent of Christ*  
*Sermon Notes*

➤ **If you’re in need of a fresh word on the old, old story this Advent, look no further than John’s apocalypse**

*\*This Christmas, remember Jesus...*

1. The long-expected consolation of Israel (vv.1-2)

2. The greatest living threat to the devil (vv.3-4)

3. God’s Messiah-King for all peoples (vv5-6)

**Next Sunday: Revelation 19:11-16 - “From the Cross to the Crown”:**  
*The Second Advent of Christ*

**Community Group Study Guide**  
For the Week of December 19th-25th

*This week, as has become our custom, we have the privilege to read and reflect on John Piper's classic poem, "The Innkeeper". Consider navigating, also, to <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-innkeeper> where you can watch and hear Piper read it, as well as listen to him share the story behind the poem: <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/whats-the-story-behind-your-poem-the-innkeeper>*

"The Innkeeper"

By John Piper

1986

Jake's wife would have been fifty-eight  
The day that Jesus passed the gate  
Of Bethlehem, and slowly walked  
Toward Jacob's Inn. The people talked  
With friends, and children played along  
The paths, and Jesus hummed a song,  
And smiled at every child he saw.

He paused with one small lass to draw  
A camel in the dirt, then said,  
"What's this?" The girl bent down her head  
To study what the Lord had made,  
Then smiled, "A camel, sir!" and laid  
Her finger on the bulging back,  
"It's got a hump." "Indeed it does,  
And who do you believe it was  
Who made this camel with his hump?"  
Without a thought that this would stump  
The rabbi guild and be reviled,  
She said, "God did." And Jesus smiled,  
"Good eyes, my child. And would that all  
Jerusalem within that wall  
Of yonder stone could see the signs  
Of peace!" He left the lass with lines  
Of simple wonder in her face,  
And slowly went to find the place  
Where he was born.

Folks said the inn  
Had never been a place for sin,  
For Jacob was a holy man.

And he and Rachel had a plan  
To marry, have a child or two,  
And serve the folk who traveled through,  
Especially the poor who brought  
Their meal and turtle-doves, and sought  
A place to stay near Zion's gate.

They'd rise up early, stay up late,  
To help the pilgrims go and come,  
And when the place was full, to some  
Especially the poorest, they would say,  
"We're sorry there's no room, but stay  
Now if you like out back. There's lots  
Of hay and we have extra cots  
That you can use. There'll be no charge.  
The stable isn't very large  
But Noah keeps it safe." He was  
A wedding gift to Jake because  
The shepherds knew he loved the dog.  
"There's nothing in the Decalogue,"  
He used to joke, "that says a man  
Can't love a dog!"

The children ran  
Ahead of Jesus as he strode  
Toward Jacob's Inn. The stony road  
That led up to the inn was deep  
With centuries of wear, and steep  
At one point just before the door.  
The Lord knocked once then twice before  
He heard an old man's voice, "round back!"  
It called. So Jesus took the track  
That led around the inn. The old  
Man leaned back in his chair and told  
The dog to never mind. "Ain't had  
No one to tend the door, my lad,  
For thirty years. I'm sorry for  
The inconvenience to your sore  
Feet. The road to Jerusalem  
Is hard ain't it? Don't mind old Shem.  
He's harmless like his dad. Won't bite  
A Roman soldier in the night.  
Sit down." And Jacob waved the stump  
Of his right arm.

“We’re in a slump  
Right now. Got lots of time to think  
And talk. Come, sit and have a drink.  
From Jacob’s well!” he laughed. “You own  
The inn?” the Lord inquired. “On loan,  
You’d better say. God owns the inn.”  
At that the Lord knew they were kin,  
And ventured on: “Do you recall  
The tax when Caesar said to all  
The world that each must be enrolled?”  
Old Jacob winced, “Are north winds cold?  
Are deserts dry? Do fishes swim  
And ravens fly? I do. A grim  
And awful year it was for me  
When God ordained that strange decree.

“How could I such a time forget?  
Why do you ask?” “I have a debt  
To pay, and I must see how much.  
Why do you say that it was such  
A grim and awful year?” He raised  
The stump of his right arm, “So dazed,  
Young man, I didn’t know I’d lost  
My arm. Do you know what it cost  
For me to house the Son of God?”

The old man took his cedar rod  
And swept it ‘round the place: “Empty.  
For thirty years alone, you see?  
Old Jacob, poor old Jacob runs  
It with one arm, a dog, and no sons.  
But I had sons . . . once. Joseph was  
My firstborn. He was small because  
His mother was so sick. When he  
Turned three the Lord was good to me  
And Rachel, and our baby Ben  
Was born, the very fortnight when  
The blessed family arrived.  
And Rachel’s gracious heart contrived  
A way for them to stay — there in  
That very stall.” The man was thin  
And tired. “You look a lot like him.”

But Jesus said, "Why was it grim?"

"We got a reputation here  
That night. Nothing at all to fear  
In that we thought. It was of God.  
But in one year the slaughter squad  
From Herod came. And where do you  
Suppose they started? Not a clue!  
We didn't have a clue what they  
Had come to do. No time to pray,  
No time to run, no time to get  
Poor Joseph off the street and let  
Him say good-bye to Ben or me  
Or Rachel. Only time to see  
A lifted spear smash through his spine  
And chest. He stumbled to the sign  
That welcomed strangers to the place,  
And looked with panic at my face,  
As if to ask what he had done.  
Young man, you ever lost a son?"

The tears streamed down the Savior's cheek,  
He shook his head, but couldn't speak.

"Before I found the breath to scream  
I heard the words, a horrid dream:  
'Kill every child who's two or less.  
Spare not for aught, nor make excess.  
Let this one be the oldest here  
And if you count your own life dear,  
Let none escape.' I had no sword  
No weapon in my house, but Lord,  
I had my hands, and I would save  
The son of my right hand . . . So brave,  
O Rachel was so brave! Her hands  
Were like a thousand iron bands  
Around the boy. She wouldn't let  
Him go and so her own back met  
With every thrust and blow. I lost  
My arm, my wife, my sons — the cost  
Of housing the Messiah here.  
Why would he simply disappear  
And never come to help?"

They sat  
In silence. Jacob wondered at  
The stranger's tears.

"I am the boy  
That Herod wanted to destroy.  
You gave my parents room to give  
Me life, and then God let me live,  
And took your wife. Ask me not why  
The one should live, another die.  
God's ways are high, and you will know  
In time. But I have come to show  
You what the Lord prepared the night  
You made a place for heaven's light.

"In two weeks they will crucify  
My flesh. But mark this, Jacob, I  
Will rise in three days from the dead,  
And place my foot upon the head  
Of him who has the power of death,  
And I will raise with life and breath  
Your wife and Ben and Joseph too  
And give them, Jacob, back to you  
With everything the world can store,  
And you will reign for evermore."