

## SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS EVE 2022

TEXT: LUKE 2: 15-20

THEME: DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

**15** When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." **16** And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. **17** And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. **18** And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. **20** And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

In the name of the Christ Child:

Everyone has their favorite Christmas carol at Christmas. There are so many: Away in a Manger, The First Noel, O Little Town of Bethlehem, O Come all Ye Faithful, Silent Night. These carols are classics, sung each and every year during Christmas, proclaiming the Good News of Christ's birth.

If you listen to the radio, you will note that some radio stations have been playing Christmas music since Halloween. And why not? People love them, they love singing them, Christmas carols bring joy to our lives.

There is one carol that I have heard on the radio recently that keeps going through my mind. You won't find it in our hymnal, in fact you may not find it in any hymnal. It is a song written in October 1962 during the Cuban missile crisis, a song where the authors were making a plea for peace.

It is a song which tells the story of the birth of Jesus, based on the Gospel of Matthew, and it includes not just the birth of Jesus but also the announcement of Jesus' birth to the shepherds. A night wind tells a lamb of a star, and then the lamb tells the young shepherd the news. The carol, written by Noel Regney, has been recorded by many and has sold millions of recordings. If you haven't recognized the carol of which I am speaking, it is the song "Do you hear what I hear?"

But when you look at the events that transpired that night of Jesus birth, people not only heard about Jesus' birth, they **saw** that Jesus was in the manger, they **saw** what took place. And that is why in the Christmas carol "Do you hear what I hear?" there is this phrase: "Do you see what I see?" And so, the question for all of us this night of Christmas Eve, is: "Do you see what I see?" What is it that you see this night when you look at the stable and see the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in the manger? What do you see?

One of the greatest sights that I have ever seen is the place where Jesus was born. It is in the basement of The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The Church itself is a massive structure, but to get into the church one must stoop low to the ground, because the doorway to the church is only 36 inches tall. Then, when you are in the church, you walk through a series of hallways

down deep into the church. Once in the basement, you find yourself in a cave, and at the bottom of the cave is a rock, with a star engraved into it. Pilgrims for centuries have knelt down to kiss the place where Jesus was born, and for you to see the place, you also would need to kneel down to see the place and the star. But you need to get on your knees, to humble yourself, in order to see it. You can see it with your eyes. But to see that place as the place where God became man, that takes the eyes of faith.

Many people around the world tonight celebrate the holiday and the season of Christmas. But what is it that they see? What is it that you see tonight and throughout your life? What do you see when you see the Christ child? Do you see just another baby that is born? Do you see a picture that is like a Currier and Ives Christmas card, with everything beautiful and all set in its proper place? What is it that you see when you look in the manger?

Do you see someone who is just a person, who did good things in his life and taught everyone to be nice to one another? Do you see the physical reality of a baby being born? Or do you see something and Someone that is God in the flesh? Do you see the miracle that took place on that night? That God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son? Do you see that Jesus is fully God and fully man? Do you see with the eyes of faith that Jesus is your Savior born for you? Do you see with the eyes and ears of faith the Good

News that the angels sang that night that “to you, personally, individually, you who are sitting here and listening to me this night, to you is born in the city of David a Savior, He is Christ the Lord, and this is what you will find when you look in the manger, you will see God’s Son in human flesh, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

Just note what happened after the angels shared the Good News of Jesus’ birth on Christmas. That “When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And that is exactly what they did. They “went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.” They not only saw the physical reality of what had happened, they also saw with the eyes of faith, they believed that God did this for them, personally. They took this event to heart so that “when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.”

And when they told others what had happened, we learn that “all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. “ All who heard the news of Jesus’ birth also had to ponder and take it to heart. They were challenged not just to see the physical reality of Jesus’ birth but they were also left to ponder the meaning of this birth for them in their lives. That is what Mary did, she “treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.”

And note the shepherd's response, that when they had returned to their fields, they responded to the news of Jesus' birth by " glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

What happened that night was no secret. The birth of Jesus was foretold centuries before, through the prophet Isaiah where he wrote: "The Virgin will conceive and bear a Son and you shall call His name Imanuel which means God is with us." "For to us a Child is born to us a Son is given." The Son of God became a baby so that you might know how much God loves you! It is as the Apostle Paul writes: " For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, **12** training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, **13** waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, **14** who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."

Dear friend, the Good News of Christmas is that Jesus was born for you! God loves you with an everlasting love! Do you believe it? Do you see that Jesus is here at this moment, to forgive you, to hold you in His everlasting arms, that He is here to bless you? Do you hear His voice, telling you that He loves you, that He is the answer to all of your problems? Do you see that Jesus

is who He says He is, and that He is your ever present Help in times of trouble? Do you see that Jesus has changed your life for anyone who is baptized in the name of Jesus has not only become His child but also is a new creation, the old things have passed away and all things have become new for you? Do you see that Jesus has given to you Himself, and in giving to you Himself He has given to you faith in Him, and a new life to live, where you love the Lord with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength? Do you see that He has made you a little Christ so that you can now live your life, not focused on yourself, but focused on the needs of others? Loving others as He loves you?

Do you see what I see? Do you see that God loves you, do you see how God has helped you in the past, in each and every circumstance? Do you see that He has been faithful to you in the past and His faithfulness lasts forever? May God the Holy Spirit give us all the eyes of faith, so that we might see with the eyes of faith that: To you is born in the city of David, he is Christ the Lord, so that by believing in Jesus, we have life by His name.

To the glory of God and in Jesus' name.

Amen