

Christmas Eve C
10:45PM

We all need a Savior. That is the story of this holy night. Yet I wonder what I would have heard had I been there that night. Would I have heard the choirs of angels singing or simply the sounds of barnyard animals shifting around? Would I have seen the star in the sky that night or simply two poor and very tired parents? Would I have understood the hushed silence of the divine presence, or simply the chill of a cold east wind? Would I have understood the message of Emmanuel, God with us, or would the cosmic implications of that evening have passed me by?

I am convinced that had other witnesses been there that night in Bethlehem it is quite possible that they could have heard and seen two entirely different stories. I believe this because all of life is this way. God never presents himself in revelation in a manner in which we are forced to believe. We are always left with an option, for that is God's way. While one person can say "*Its a miracle!*" another says "*It's coincidence.*" One comes to a conclusion by faith the other through logic. Either way, we all need a Savior.

Certainly very few people in Palestine saw and heard and understood what took place that night. The choirs of angels singing were drowned out by the haggling and trading going on in local bazaars. There was a bright Star in the sky, but the only ones apparently to pay any attention to it were pagan astrologers from the East known as the wise men. If anyone did see Mary and Joseph on that fateful night, they were too preoccupied with their own problems tending to their flocks, assisting travelers with lodging and sleeping.

For George Bailey it should have been a wonderful life but he just could not see past the disappointments and tragedy that happened to him. In one scene the angel speaks to him of a different perspective:

Clarence: You've been given a great gift, George: A chance to see what the world would be like without you.

Clarence: You see George, you've really had a wonderful life. Don't you see what a mistake it would be to just throw it away?

Clarence: Strange, isn't it? Each man's life touches so many other lives. When he isn't around he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?

In another scene George finally sees how his choice not to have been born was not the right one. *George returns to the bridge where his nightmare began, hoping to bring back his old life]*

George Bailey: [*praying*] Clarence! Clarence! Help me, Clarence! Get me back! Get me back, I don't care what happens to me! Get me back to my wife and kids! Help me Clarence, please! Please! I wanna live again. I wanna live again. Please, God, let me live

again.

[*it begins to snow again*]. (from Internet Movie Data Base:

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0038650/quotes>).

What we see and what we hear in life depends not upon the events but rather on how we see the *JOURNEY*. And the journey toward Christmas is one we see all too differently. A week off from school, stress, "*will they like the presents I got them,*" "*I'm lonely.*" Or it may be that an old song captures your imagination:

Said the night wind to the little lamb,
 " Do you see what I see?
 Way up in the sky, little lamb,
 Do you see what I see?
 A star, a star, dancing in the night
 With a tail as big as a kite,
 With a tail as big as a kite."*

* "Do you hear what I hear?" written in October 1962 with lyrics by Noël Regney and music by Gloria Shayne Baker.

There were so few that knew the story of Christmas in Jesus' day. Most were not looking for God's visitation. Shepherds working in the fields, received a most unexpected visit. The Lord's angel, His messenger lit up the sky and they heard for themselves what priests and kings longed to hear. Terror overcame them. Then a message of hope was heard: "*Fear not: for behold I am bringing you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.*"

Do you think that would have been impressive enough? Yet for these favored ones, a light show and the annunciation were not meant to be enough. There was more to come. A heavenly host of singing messengers joined the choir director with the D minor piece, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!*" Singing it once through could not have been enough. Three times seems more appropriate. They had to make sure these shepherds were awake.

Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy,
 " Do you hear what I hear?
 Ringing through the sky, shepherd boy,
 Do you hear what I hear?
 A song, a song high above the trees
 With a voice as big as the sea,
 With a voice as big as the sea."

The shepherds said to one another, "*Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.*" So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told to them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds had said.

This Christmas, God invites you to see for yourself what has taken place on this day. Read the story again and again. Hear the voices sing the glory of God in your mind and heart. And when you see the glory of the Christ child through the eyes of faith, through the eyes of a child, spread the tale and let all the world know. The person you tell may be searching for Him right now! For we all need a Savior. We all need a Savior.
AMEN