



Food For Thought: Christmas, Do You See What I See?

“O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.”

~ Psalms 9:5

It is interesting to observe the reaction of people to the Christian season. To children, Christmas means presents, trees, toys, lights, Santa Claus, and stories about Jesus. To adults, it is all about holiday parties, social events, and entertainment. But all those festivities come with a lot of baggage above and beyond the daily grind - shopping, writing cards, wrapping presents, decorating our homes, paying Christmas bills, and working extra hours to pay for it all. And for businesses, it is a season of increased sales that bring in the highest profits possible. So, Christmas means different things to different people.

What does it mean to you? Is it a visit home? A memory of a loved one lost? A time to revel? To millions, it means nothing. They do not know Jesus. December 25th is just another day.

But Christmas represents everything to the real Christian. It means that God loves us with all His heart. It means He gave us the best gift the world has ever known. Our Savior was born, walked among us, died for our sins, and that, gave us hope.

Do you hear what I hear?
A song, a song
High above the tree (sung)

One of the things I love about the Christmas season is the music. It is joyful, uplifting, and happy and takes me back to an era of childhood innocence. Out of all the songs played at Christmas time, one has become one of my favorites. It was written in 1962 by Regney and Stein as a plea for peace during the Cuban Missile Crisis. By song standards, it is only an infant –a mere 53 years old.

Compare that to some of the Christmas songs that date all the way back to the 4th Century.

I was only twelve when that song was written, but I am convinced that as the years, decades and centuries go by, this carol will take its place besides some of the all-time favorites like Silent Night or Away in a Manger. Can you guess which one it is? It is the Christmas carol, "Do You See What I see?" You probably recognized it by the hints in this article.

It is a wonderful, wonderful story, and easy to remember. There is a night wind, and that night wind *sees* what Christmas is about. So, the night wind tells the little lamb, and then the little lamb *sees* what Christmas is about and goes to the shepherd boy. The little shepherd boy *sees* the meaning of Christmas, and he goes to the mighty king, and he says to the mighty king, "Do you know what I know?" Then I can imagine the mighty king saying to everyone, everywhere, in a deep, gruff voice, "Listen to what I say?" That's what kings always declare, "Listen to what I say!" The king announces to his kingdom: "A child, a child, will bring you goodness and light."

Do you see what I see? (sung)

When you look in the manger did you see the Christ child, do you ... *see*? Where do *you find* the Christ in this Christmas season? There are lots of places to look.

When you came to church on Sunday, what did you see? Did you see some old friends that you have known for decades? Maybe it was the elderly people sitting quietly in their pew and not talking to anybody? Or did you see some new friends? Did you see the pastor standing up in front of his holy nation – the Shepard watching over his flock? Did you see God's people coming together in worship getting ready to go out into the world to spread His love? Did you see them with their hands in the air asking God to help the go out into a troubled world and try to make it a better place to live? Did you *see*? Did you...*really see* what I saw?

Did you look around the sanctuary and marvel at how beautiful it is? Did you see the countless hours put in by the decorating committee and cleaning crew to bring out the warmth of the season? Do you see the person vacuuming the floors? Did you see the pastors working late to ensure that all was ready for

service? Did you say thank you to the people on the security detail for keeping watch over you so you can worship in safety? Did you see any of the people who support all the different ministries that make up this Church? Did you *see*? Did you...*really see* what I saw?

Or when you opened the Communion elements this morning, did you just see a little cracker, a thimble of wine? Or did you see ...people with their burdens being lifted? See all of yours and their sins forgiven? Did you see...that the sins of your husband or wife, your child, your friend, were also forgiven just because you asked? Do you see that you can finally forgive yourself because God has forgiven you? Did you *see*? Did you *truly see* any of that when you received your Sacrament?

And when were at work last week, did you see all those people sitting at their desks, looking somewhat like you? Did you see them wearing their problems? When you were jammed up in traffic and were stuck, ever so stuck, in traffic, did you see the rage building in the other drivers? In yourself? When you were dodging shoppers with your shopping cart at the store and the lines were a mile long, did you still act like a Christian? When you look at others, do you see the less fortunate and realize that some of them may not of had a great breakfast like you this morning? Do you see their families and children? Will you *see*? Will you see that there is also a true sadness on the faces of some during the holiday season or will you only see the things you want to see? *Do you really want to see what I see?*

Christmas is also a feast for the eyes. What do you see when you look at all those beautiful lights? They are beginning to pop up everywhere – tons of colored lights, inflatable yard decorations, electronic moving figures, all laughing and shining and smiling. Do you see one image of Christ amidst all those decorations? One Nativity scene? Do you *see* how commercialized His birth has become? Did you...*really see* what I saw?

Maybe you will come to candlelight service and see the sanctuary aglow with candles brightly lit and twinkling in the darkness. Maybe you will go home after service, walk into the living room, and turn off all the lights except for the lights of the Christmas tree. In all of this, did you see that those splended lights should point to Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world and that He should be the

guiding light of your life? Don't you see that you have forgotten that Christ should be at the center of all this celebration? Do you...*really see* what I see?

Way up in the sky little lamb
Do you see what I see? (sung)

Or how about those Christmas presents? How did you do last year? How will you do this year? I usually get sweatshirts, golf balls shirts and neckties pretty much every year, along with a certain special present. Underneath the presents that will be exchanged this year, did you see the present of God himself gave you? Did you see the gift of Christ? Were you reminded that Christ is always a gift, never earned, never deserved, but always freely given in love, like any present? Did you see? Or do you just see colorfully wrapped material presents?

Has God been good to you this year? Has He been faithful and not forsaken you? Do you see that *God is with you* in *all* the circumstances of your life? Do you see? Do you see that there is *no* Christmas without Jesus. Christmas is His birthday. No fanfare, no presents, no glitter, no bows needed.

Make sure this season that we don't forget the real reason of the season is His birth, His death and resurrection, and His coming again--a cradle, a cross, and a crown. Let us not only make room in our hearts for Him, but come before Him with worship and our gifts and leave determined to tell others His story.

Only then can we see what the night wind saw - the true meaning of Christmas.

Listen to what I say (sung)
A Child, A Child,
He will bring us goodness and light

Just Some Food for Thought

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