

## Do You Hear What I Hear?

### I. Do You See What I See?

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."

On his holiday CD, "Christmas is with us again," Garrison Keillor ends his telling of the Christmas story with these words: "The shepherds were lucky. They never had to believe in something they had read about. They just came and saw it. Came and saw God, lying in the straw."

I'm not sure the shepherds had it so lucky. With the benefit of hindsight we know it was the Lord God himself that Mary laid in the manger. But apart from the song of the angels, what would have led the shepherds to know this was God? It wasn't as if all of Bethlehem rushed out to the stable to see this Jesus, Joseph and Mary. Just a cow, a donkey, some sheep, and some shepherds.

Would you have seen this baby as the Savior of the world? Do we see him NOW as the Christ, the son of David? Maybe. Maybe not. I'm sure some of you hold that kid in the manger is your God. I'd be surprised if at least some of you didn't think that was pure hogwash.

Which is why the question the night wind asks the little lamb is one of the first, central questions of any Christian to any non-Christian: **DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?**

The innkeeper saw only a Jewish woman and her husband in a tough spot  
The shepherds saw a new life in store for all of the poorest and helpless  
The King of Israel saw a threat to his power  
The astrologers from the east saw a king who would at last bring peace  
The new star meant the fulfillment of prophecy to some  
To others it meant nothing at all.

DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

A baby who had come to change the world?  
Or just another cute kid?

## **II. Do You Hear What I Hear?**

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."

In his famous letter to the Church in Rome, the Apostle Paul wrote,

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But how can they call on the one they haven't believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" But not all the Israelites accepted the good news... What we learn from this is that faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."

In order to be able to SEE what a CHRISTIAN sees, and not what the rest of the WORLD sees, we must HEAR what a CHRISTIAN hears, which is the good news of the salvation that comes to us through this baby in Bethlehem; through the cross he will carry, through the death he will die.

So the call of the Christian must ever be, "**DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?**"

Do you hear the voices of the angels surrounding us, even now?  
Or do you hear only the mundane voices of the world?  
Do you hear the call of God to follow his Son,  
Or only the voice of a preacher who can easily be dismissed and forgotten?  
Do you, like the early Christians, hear the GOOD NEWS of the Christian story,  
Or like many of Paul's fellow Jews, will you walk away from Jesus again tonight?

**DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?**

### **III. Do You Know What I Know?**

Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king,  
"Do you know what I know?  
In your palace warm, mighty king,  
Do you know what I know?  
A Child, a Child shivers in the cold--  
Let us bring him silver and gold,  
Let us bring him silver and gold."

The two best documentaries of 2005, according to a reviewer I heard on NPR, were "March of the Penguins" and "Grizzly Man." The first is the cute love story of penguin for penguin. It almost portrays penguins as being, well, "human." The other story, "Grizzly Man," tells the story of how a man convinced himself he was "one" with the fiercest bears in all of North America, until one day they rip him and his girlfriend limb from limb. "March of the Penguins" suggests that nature is cute, if not downright cuddly. "Grizzly Man" shows nature to be red in tooth and claw. As the director of "Grizzly Man" put it, "I believe the common character of the universe is not harmony, but hostility, chaos and murder."

Martin Luther, the 16<sup>th</sup> century reformer of the catholic church after whom are church body is named, wondered at how God's knowledge and the world's knowledge are so far apart. He actually agreed with the director of Grizzly Man, that if it wasn't for Jesus, one would have to conclude that there either is no God, or that he is at best remote, and at worst, utterly hostile, to the human race.

In one of his Christmas sermons Luther wrote:

"[By Jesus' birth in a stable] God shows that he pays no attention at all to what the world is or has or can do. He also shows that the world knows nothing at all of, and pays no attention to, what God is or has or does. Behold, this is the first symbol by which Christ puts to shame the world and show that all of its...knowledge...is contemptible to us, that its greatest wisdom is in reality foolishness, that its best performance is wrongdoing, and that its greatest good is evil. What did Bethlehem really have, when it didn't have Christ? What does they have now, who [at the time of Christ's birth] were well off? And what do Mary and Joseph lack now, even though at that time they had no place to sleep comfortably during the night?"

**"DO YOU KNOW WHAT I KNOW?"** That's what God is asking all of us tonight.

Do you still think that your logic and reason and feelings  
Are shared or understandable to God?  
Or that you are able to think God's thoughts?  
Or decide for yourself what God wants from you or me?

#### **IV. Listen To What I Say**

Said the king to the people everywhere,  
"Listen to what I say!  
Pray for peace, people, everywhere,  
Listen to what I say!  
This Child, this Child sleeping in the night  
He will bring us goodness and light,  
He will bring us goodness and light."

DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

A baby lying in a manger who changed the entire course of history? To the point where next week, in every corner of the globe, even those who have never heard of Jesus will celebrate the arrival of 2006...THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 2006...2006 years after the first Christmas?

DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?

The voice of our God, who created us in the beginning, who watched as we destroyed his creation by our own pride and selfish ambition, who sent his Son into the world anyway, who now calls us to believe in and follow that Son, whatever the cost? Who asks us to trust him now, so that in the life to come we may rest with him eternally?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT I KNOW?

That God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts, but that he is willing and ready to teach us through his Scriptures, to teach us through his Son Jesus?

LISTEN TO WHAT I SAY!

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

Make the Lord's joy complete this Christmas,  
See, Hear and Know that the Lord is good.  
And that his steadfast love endure forever,  
To those who will not turn away from him,  
But seek their salvation in a babe lying in a manger.

Amen.