

**"SOME CHILDREN SEE HIM..."**

(Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20)

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*[CHRISTMAS EVE MESSAGE]*

**[PROPS NEEDED: Sallman portrait of Jesus printed in bulletin]**

[Cornerstone U.M.C.; 12-24-23, Christmas Eve PM Services]

--I--

1. **[SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20** (both texts read *previously* in service: Isaiah 9 during lighting of Christ Candle and Luke 2 sometime else)]
  
2. A children's Sunday School teacher was once trying to teach his class about who Jesus was. And to help do that, he showed his class a copy of a famous portrait of Jesus. ...**[SHOW SALLMAN JESUS HEAD PICTURE ON SCREEN]** And as they were looking at it, he told them: "*Now class, this really isn't Jesus. It's just someone's idea of what Jesus looked like.*" Little Sally, in the front row, perked up and asked, "*You mean, that's not Jesus?*"...to which the teacher replied, "*No, Sally, it's not.*" But not to be outdone, Sally answered, "*But it sure does look like Jesus!*"

A--Well, on that first Christmas Eve so long ago God -- in the form of the baby Jesus -- came to earth to show us what He looked like.

B--Not in a physical sense, but in the sense that, in this tiny infant, God's love and grace was shown in a way never before been seen. <sup>1</sup>

3. How remarkable it must have been for the Shepherds that first Christmas Eve when (as Luke 2:11-12 says) they were told... "*To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is... the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped in [bands of cloth] and lying in a manger.*"

A--Imagine the irony here... poor, humble shepherds were being told to "*Go find God in a barn, wrapped in dirty rags, lying in a food trough for animals*" -- it all sounded silly!

B--Yet, strange as it sounded, Verse 15 says that that's exactly what the shepherds did: "*Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened ...[and] confirm what the Lord has revealed to us.*"

4. In a manner of speaking, what these Shepherds were teaching us is that (among other things) Christmas is a time for all God's children (that's *all of us*) to go and "*see*" Jesus.

A--Not just in the sense that we *attend* church on Christmas Eve, but that we experience him *personally* in our own hearts, as those shepherds did so long ago.

B--The sad truth, of course, is that (just as happened 2000 years ago) *we*, too, often miss seeing Jesus today, even when he's right in our very midst -- And WHY is that?

--II--

5. Well, sometimes we miss seeing him because **we're just too busy.**

A--I wonder, for example, if -- on that first Christmas Eve -- the angels *tried* to tell the innkeeper about the birth, but he was too busy looking after other guests.

1--Maybe they tried telling the crowds of Bethlehem that God himself was *wrapped* in swaddling clothes asleep (or crying) in their little town, but they were too *wrapped* up in their own affairs and needs to notice.

2--So, business went on as usual that first Christmas Day, with few realizing the significance of what had just taken place there.

B--And it makes me wonder:...

1--...Are *we* today sometimes so busy with our Christmas baking, decorating, partying and being stressed out that *we forget* to take time to stop, listen and then -- like those shepherds -- to "*go and see this thing*" that has taken place?

2--Are we so busy doing even good "church" things we fail to take time to kneel at the manger and worship Jesus right in our very midst?

3--I know that there are some years that I get that way about my Christmas preparations, and I fail to "see" (or perceive) Jesus right in the midst of it all!

6. But perhaps another reason we miss seeing Jesus at Christmas is because **we look for him in the wrong places.**

A--2000 years ago, a dirty, smelly stable or cave out in back of a busy, overcrowded hotel was the *last* place the Shepherds or others expected to find God Almighty -- a palace in Jerusalem or Rome would have been a more appropriate!

B--So I wonder: do WE sometimes also miss seeing Jesus because we, like the Shepherds and others, look for Jesus in all the wrong people, places, and situations?

1--We look for him in big, flashy, churches, and in "nice, respectable" people.

2--We look for him in the *good* times of life, when everything is happy and when we've got it "all together."

C--And though Jesus *can be* found/seen in these, the 1st Christmas story reminds us that, more often, we *also* find/see him in the *unexpected* people, places & situations of life.

1--We can "*see*" him in the poor, the outcast, those who're different from us, those with whom we disagree, & those who're not necessarily "socially acceptable."

2--...We can "*see*" him in the pain, suffering, grief, tragedies, and needs of life.

3--...And we can even "*see*" him in people who've hurt or offended us, or who we don't know if we can even trust!

--III--

7. My point is that just as God came to earth 2000 years ago as a tiny, vulnerable baby, so God comes and appears to us today wearing many guises, as well.

A--One evening as little Johnny was going to bed, it began thundering and lightning outside. After a while, his father went upstairs to check on him with a flashlight. As he entered the room, a clap of thunder woke Johnny up with a start, causing him to be scared and cry out "*Who is it?!*"

And, knowing it would only scare him *more* if he turned his flashlight on *Johnny*, his father instead wisely turned the light on *himself* and said, "*Don't be afraid, Johnny -- it's only me.*"

B--Well, on that first Christmas so long ago, God came down to earth to shine light on *himself* so we -- *His* children -- could "*see*" His face and not be afraid anymore.

C--So, whether we're 2 or 102, "*Some Children* [of God] *See Him*" at Christmas because they open themselves to experience *his* birth in *their* hearts -- will *you* be one of them?

8. [PRAY]
9. [Music Solo: "*Some Children See Him*"]
10. [Christmas Candle-lighting during UMH#239, "*Silent Night*", followed by first verse of #246, "*Joy to the World*"]

#### **ENDNOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> Of course, there had been *signs* of God's presence in the world -- especially in the history of the people of Israel. But up until the birth of Jesus, no one had ever actually *seen* God Himself -- like trying to see wind, people had only experienced the *effects* of God's presence.