

Christmas Eve
December 24, 2020

“Behold...a Savior who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11)

By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace, Christmas peace, from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Our waiting has ended once again! Christmas is here! There is such beauty and wonderment this night! The sights and sounds that the shepherds saw and heard while tending their flocks that first Christmas night capture our hearts this evening. So, we heard in our fourth reading from Luke 2.

“Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.”

“**Behold**”. That’s the word that God purposefully chose to write, because He wants everybody to stop whatever you’re doing and give your undivided attention to what’s coming. “**Behold**”. “Your attention please! God is talking to you!”

If this were a text message you would see three giant emojis. A raised hand, two big eyes, and an ear. Stop, look and listen! A messenger from the Lord came and stood before them. Stop!

Look! What do you see? The glory of the Lord shone around them. Ah! Such glory, so beautiful and yet it is too much for sinful man, for you and me, to gaze upon. What the shepherds saw caused them great fear.

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to tell her that she was to be Jesus’ mother, she was troubled. So also, was the reaction of Zacharias when the angel visited him. These were believers in God, righteous by faith and faithful in service. And yet, their sinful natures, our sinful natures, still cower in God’s awesome glory reflected by angels. So, we too earnestly confessed our sins at the start of the service, for we cannot stand in the presence of God’s glory without alarm.

But, **listen**, the angel's first words to Mary and Zacharias were "Do not be afraid". And, the angel who came to the shepherds did not come to cause fear on this holy night. No! Just the opposite! The angel came to remove all fear with this heavenly message. **Stop, look, and listen** now to the angel's words.

Today's text for this Christmas Eve, is the angel's message from Luke 2.

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:10-11)

Here ends our text. "**Behold**" was the first word the angel said.

Were you listening to what followed? Three words jumped out at me... "good", "great", and "all".

Good news! Good tidings, not bad news!

Great joy! Not just a little cheer, but overwhelming, absolutely earth-shattering joy!

And this good news and great joy is not just for a few people, not just for the shepherds who were first privileged to hear this message, but for all people! All people, you and I included! The angel's message is timeless for all people in every generation of every race and language!

Ah, so we'll hear Simeon's song on Sunday, a little sneak preview, as he stopped and looked upon the Christ child in his arms and listened to the Holy Spirit who inspired him to say these words:

"For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." (Luke 2:30-32)

And so, whenever we see the word, "**Behold**" in scripture, God is calling us to not just to **stop, look, listen**, but also **understand** and **believe!** Receive the Christmas present and unwrap it! Treasure it! It's yours!

Yes, understand that the child born to you, and Simeon, and each of you, in the city of David, Bethlehem, is the Savior, Christ the Lord!

This is God's doing - His salvation that He graciously gives to the whole world! This is the Christmas present of Christmas presents – a Savior, Christ the Lord! And without skipping a beat, the sky was filled with angels giving God all the glory for the salvation that has come to the world by the birth of His Son, Jesus!

**“Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”**

God makes this night Holy by coming into the darkness of our world of our nights and our days with this good news. God gives His peace and goodwill to all men through His Son Jesus!

Peace! That Jesus would reconcile the world to Himself by His death on the cross and make peace with God for all men. So Paul says in Colossians 1:19-20,

“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”

Ah, for the story of Christmas continues from the wooden manger to the wooden cross. For in the hands of Pontius Pilate, Jesus was beaten, and a crown of thorns and purple robe was placed on Him. And Pilate brought Him forth before the people and said, **“Behold, the man!” (John 19:5).**

“Behold” the God man who takes upon Himself the sins of the whole world and die so that we would not die eternally. Behold, your Savior!

At the death of Jesus, scripture tells us to stop, look and listen again.

“Behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split”. (Matthew 27:51)

Now, God gives unrestricted access to the holy of holies to all people! We can come into His holy presence by the blood of Jesus who washes our sins and presents us holy before God through faith! Behold, salvation was accomplished for us on Good Friday. Good Tidings of Great Joy!

But that wasn't all, as you know. Three days later, scripture tells us to **stop, look, and listen** again for the proof is in the pudding, Easter pudding that is!

“Behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

And the angel continues speaking to the women and said, **“And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.”**

Behold, the angel has told us how the Christmas story becomes the Easter story, our Easter story! And as we look closer at this Christmas present, we **behold** our resurrection for Christ is risen!

Ah, what beauty we behold this Christmas Eve! Our salvation! Our resurrection through Jesus!

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

Through the gift of faith, we can behold what John beheld in person. Through faith, we can behold, understand and believe by the Holy Spirit, His glorious message. It comes full of grace, and not fear. Grace and mercy, and peace and love, and salvation, and truth. The Christmas tag on this Christmas present says, From: God , To: you. Blessed Christmas! Amen.

“The peace of God, sung by the angels, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)