

Christmas Day December 25, 2016

Luke 2:8-20

### The Sights of Christmas

Have your senses been awakened this Advent and Christmas? Throughout Advent we have touched and felt God's presence, we have tasted the bread and cup, we have smelled the spices of the season and we have been blessed with the sounds of music and story. Today we reflect on what we see as we understand Christmas.

What do we see as we hear this story shared?

Travelers—a young couple traveling with a donkey in what would take us just over an hour today. The young woman is pregnant and is due very soon to deliver. Why did they have to travel under these circumstances? Why couldn't Joseph go back to Bethlehem alone and leave Mary with her family?

The Stable—the only available place for Mary to rest. But what was she going to sleep on. They didn't pack a tent, or a pillow. There were many animals in the stable and it was very full- just like the inn.

The shepherds- poor young men trying to make a living on the outskirts of town; working in a pasture land belonging to someone else. They were hired men whose job was to keep the animals safe. Yet what happened? Angels appear to them and they are terrified. Yet the shepherds listen to the message of the angels and they are filled with joy. They run into the town and they go to the stable where Jesus is lying in a manger. They worship and are in awe and then they leave to spread the good news.

The angels- what was it the shepherds saw? Bright terrifying light which came very quickly. One angel speaks and then a whole lot join in the message. They leave very quickly once the shepherds hear the story.

In a distant far land—the Magi see a star and decide to follow it. They had complete faith that what they saw was heralding the birth of the “king of the Jews”. They packed gifts to offer this king- when they found him- gold- as royalty- King; incense- deity—God; myrrh- future suffering as the Saviour.

The star—who all saw it and knew its meaning? OT prophecy of Numbers 24:17 “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.” This

prophecy was known by the Magi or Wise Men in the east and when they saw the appearance of the star they knew the 'newborn king' was born.

The Baby Jesus- everything revolves around the baby; hope, peace, love and joy wrapped up and placed in the feeding trough. God made flesh; birth-life-resurrection; salvation for you and me; eternal life.

But what do you see this Christmas day? What do you see in the manger? Hope wonder love fulfilled joy? What do you see in this infant born king of the Jews; born for the world to receive as Saviour? Born as the one True Light. Are you seeing Jesus again for the first time or are you renewing your faith in the infant holy and Christ the king? What do you see this Christmas morning?

As we explore the Senses of Christmas what have you been able to understand as being important for you this Christmas? Have you been touched by the Spirit of God? Have you felt comforted and been comforting to others?

When you tasted the bread and juice shared in remembrance of Christ and as you will share in a special meal with family and friends today—have you tasted anew the presence of Christ?

When you smelled familiar scents of spices and vegetables, breads and sweets cooking and baking in preparation for today? Were you drawn to the scent of a new born baby? Or were you thinking only of where he was amidst the animals in the barn?

The sounds of Christmas are varied—beautiful music, or noisy cash registers, speeding cars and lots of traffic; soothing melodies and loud songs of joy. All focus on the birth of the baby or a country and community not sure what is important.

What do you see as Christmas? What is your focus? Has this year's celebration of Christ's birth shown you that the true light to follow is Jesus? What is it you think God envisions for us in the year ahead? What do you see?

As we worship Jesus Christ the baby in the manger, let us not forget that it is out of love from God that He came to us. Let us not forget that Jesus grew up and fulfilled his life's purpose—to live, to die, to rise again. And it is through Christ alone our hope is found. Let us rejoice in this as we sing with joy that is Jesus is born! Amen.