

Do You Hear What I Hear?

December 19, 2021

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church Pastor Tyson Labuhn

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

As the season of Advent yields to Christmas, I don't know about you, but I find myself listening to Christmas music more and more. While I like to listen to all kinds of music, and it seems like most current artists have their own Christmas album, I tend to enjoy the more traditional hymns and American Christmas songs. And one of my favorites, among many, is, "Do you hear what I hear?"

Unlike many Christmas songs, it doesn't begin with the words of its title. And even before the words, "Do you hear what I hear?" we hear, "Do you see what I see?" Then comes the verse "Do you hear what I hear," before the verse "do you know what I know?" And the answer to each question is yes because we've heard the Christmas story before. But then in the last verse of the song, it tells us, "Listen to what I say!" And when you think of that, in reference to what God shares with us in the Gospel reading, maybe it's time for us to listen more intently to what is being said.

Both Mary and Elizabeth heard God's joyful promises. The angel had gone to the Temple and shared with Zechariah, that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son. And both Zechariah and Elizabeth were passed a normal age to have children. But God was doing so that their child might prepare the way for the Messiah to come. Then, the angel went to Mary, and finally Joseph.

The news that the angel shared was more than the kind you would be prompted to read on your cellphone because it was a blessing. It was the voice of God bringing to them joyful promises. Only something that God could bring about because nothing is impossible with God. Young Mary was so excited about the news, that she got ready and went with haste into the hill country to a town in Judah. She enters Zechariah's house and greets Elizabeth. And while Zechariah and Elizabeth hadn't shared their news, Mary already knows that Elizabeth is pregnant. She wanted to see for herself and maybe even to confirm, that even though she was a virgin, as the angel had said, the Lord had chosen her to give birth to the Messiah.

Do you hear what I hear? The word of God shares joyful promises to us. And yet today, we have so much information coming at us all the time that we have to really pay attention to hear the joyful promises spoken by God to us. So often we doubt and misconstrue this kind of news because it seems the only news that we see, hear, or read is bad news. News of devastation in the world around us, news of those close to us who aren't doing well, or even news that says the church is no longer what it once was. It seems like it's this kind of news that's constantly streaming into our lives. So, we really need to pay attention to what God wants us to hear, because we live in a sinful decaying world.

Just about all of us wish that we could live in that perfect world envisioned by the writers of Christmas carols, but ever since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden the world has been, and continues to be, less than perfect. And the sin that permeates the world tries to rob us of the joyful promises spoken to us by God. Just like it does to those who have stopped listening and believing in God's message of

salvation. Because our inheritance from Adam and Eve is that we would no longer have the joy of being in the Garden. Rather we would work by the sweat of our brow. We would grumble and complain because of the thorns and thistles and end up as dust in the ground. This is the judgment that was given to them, and us, and yet, He still shares and confirms a joyful promise of our Savior.

Do you hear what I hear? Do you hear that joyful promise that God has given to us? When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And in a loud voice, Elizabeth says, ***"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"*** And after explaining that her baby leaped for joy in her womb, she says, ***"Blessed is she who has believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."***

Today it seems the best way to guard our hearts is not to be amazed or surprised or excited about the things we hear. Miraculous things really are happening around us, but in order to protect ourselves, we receive the news of miraculous things with indifference. After all, men have walked on the moon and we've been able to extend lives with cures for a host of diseases. What's next? Curing the latest disease, but even that seems to be underway. So, instead of getting excited about the countless miracles that are happening all around us, some not even thought of during the time of Mary and Elizabeth, we remain indifferent.

I wonder if an angel spoke to any one of us today would we listen? And even if we did, would we recognize the voice of God or recognize His blessings? The Lord feeds us, clothes us,

and provides for all that we need. So often, instead of recognizing all that God has done for us, and continues to do for us, we go along with the rest of the world and become proud of all the things that we do.

Do you hear that I hear? Do you hear that God has done all of these things? When Jesus was born not everyone recognized Him. John the Baptist had to prepare the way so that people knew Jesus was the Messiah. The angel had to come to Zechariah in the Temple, Mary, Joseph, and Elizabeth so that they themselves might know that the Savior who is to come, has come! And after the angel left them, they found for themselves that God's joyful promises are true. The infant who was once born in a manger is our Lamb of God, who takes away all our sins, day after day, until we come to see, hear, and know that He is now seated at the right hand of the Father, full of grace and truth and that He will come again.

The Christmas song says, "Do you see what I see? Do you hear what I hear? Do you know what I know?" It's by grace, only by grace, that we can see, hear, and know that God's joyful promises are true for us. Over the course of this next week, we'll be able to experience more opportunities to worship Him and have our ears and eyes open to the miraculous deeds that God has done and is doing in our lives. That we might be able to see, hear, and know them, and life might well up within us once again. Do you hear what I hear?

In Jesus' name, Amen.