

"DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?"
Isaiah 9:2-7 Luke 2:1-20
December 24, 2021 Christmas Eve
York Center Church of the Brethren
Pastor Christy Waltersdorff

Do you see what I see?

That is quite possibly the first thing the shepherds said to one another when the angel appeared in the night sky.

Do you see that too or is it just me?

Do you see what I see?

The Wise Men may have said the same thing when the extraordinary star rose in the dark.

Do you see that? It's amazing! What could it mean?

Do you see what I see?

This is the question we have been asking throughout the season of Advent. Each Sunday in worship we have listened to the witnesses who first saw Jesus in the flesh; the ones who recognized his glory from the very beginning. Elizabeth, Zechariah, and John; Mary and Joseph; the shepherds; the Wise Men. Ordinary people who were blessed with extraordinary vision.

They saw their great God; the One who called the creation into being; the terrifying and awe-inspiring God from whom Moses had to hide his face; that awesome God was before them, in the form of an infant, a helpless baby who couldn't even see yet himself.

Do you see what I see?

Many people looked at the child and had no idea who he was. Even as an adult people didn't recognize him because he didn't look anything at all like what they thought a Messiah should look like. But the witnesses of Christmas kept their eyes and their hearts open, and they saw who he really was.

On this holy night, this Christmas Eve, we celebrate God's foolish, abundant grace. We celebrate the scandal of the incarnation- when God took on human form and was born and lived among us. The gift of Jesus was purely God's invention. It isn't something we could have thought up on our own.

Who could ever have imagined God being smuggled into the world in the womb of a woman?
Being born like we were born?

The birth we celebrate tonight is perhaps the most intimate, personal gift God could ever give to us. You have to admit that a baby changes everything. Perhaps that is why God came to us as a newborn. Babies aren't threatening. They need us. They are beautiful and cuddly, and full of potential.

We thought we knew who God was and then, all the sudden, we didn't know anything at all. God has a way of surprising us, showing up in places we would never have expected or even wanted; leading us into new understanding and clearer insight; calling us to an even deeper relationship with one another and with the Divine Presence.

There is no doubt about it, Jesus was a surprise to just about everyone. But the faithful welcomed him- once they recovered from their shock- and let's face it- Jesus was quite a shock!

They looked into that sweet little face, and they recognized the face of God. They looked at baby Jesus and they said, "Oh, there you are, God. We have waited so long to see you!"

Once a year, on this holy night, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, a baby who changed the world like no one else. But what do we do the rest of the year? Do we pack him away with the rest of the Christmas decorations and wait for next December to dust him off and sit him in a place of prominence again? Do we sing our carols, open our gifts, and then move on to the New Year without a second glance or a second thought?

Do you see what I see?

None of our Christmas witnesses saw Jesus and then went back to life as usual. They were all changed by their encounter with the Holy Child. And we are too. It can take us a lifetime to fully realize the significance of that baby for our lives and for the world. And that is one of the gifts of Christmas.

We worship and give thanks for this great gift tonight and then we are called to spend the rest of the year really looking at Jesus so we can recognize him when we see him; so we can allow his grace and mercy to transform our lives.

The presence of Jesus always demands a response- we can welcome him or reject him- but we cannot ignore him.

Do you see what I see?

I see a divine and holy gift from a God who loves us; a God who created us in the divine image and calls us beloved children.

I see an infant on whose delicate shoulders rests the weight of the world and the glory of God.

I see hope wrapped in flesh and blood sleeping in a manger.

I see the one who opens our blinded eyes so we can truly see.

I see One who calls us to open our hearts so that we can be transformed and become the people God has created us to be.

I see love.

Pure and holy love, given to you and given to me; given to the whole world.

Do you see what I see?

Amen.