

“SOME CHILDREN SEE HIM...”

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

[CHRISTMAS EVE COMMUNION MESSAGE]

[PROP NEEDED: Salieri portrait of Jesus on PPT]

[East Cobb U.M.C.; 12-24-07]

--I--

1. [Texts: Both Isaiah 9:2-7 & Luke 2:1-20 texts read earlier in service.]

2. [Story of Portrait Which LOOKED Like Jesus]

An elementary grade Sunday School teacher was once trying to teach his class about the nature of Jesus' life on earth. And to help do that, he showed his class a copy of a famous portrait of Jesus. [SHOW JESUS PICTURE ON SCREEN] And as he was showing 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.*” Not to be outdone, though Sally answered, “*But it sure does look like Jesus!*”

3. Well, on that first Christmas Eve so long ago, God, in the form of the baby Jesus, did indeed show us what He looked like.

A--He showed us not necessarily in a physical sense, but in the sense that, in this tiny infant, all the love and grace and mercy of God the Father was revealed in a way that had never been seen before.

B--Now, there *had* been signs and evidences of God's presence and power before in history -- especially in the history of the people of Israel.

C--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.

4. So, how remarkable must it have been to the Shepherds that first Christmas Eve when the angel of God appeared and told them the words we find recorded in Luke 2:11... “*To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is... the Lord.*”

A--In other words, God Himself was being born? *How* could that be?

B--If He was a holy and divine *God*, then *why* did He need to bother being born as an imperfect *human being*?

5. And what's more is that these shepherds were told to then go and *find* this occurrence: Verse 12: “*This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth ('swaddling clothes') and lying in a manger.*”

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

B--And yet, as strange as it all sounded, Verse 15 tells us that these shepherds said to one another: “*Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.*”

C--In a manner of speaking, like those first Shepherds, Christmas is a time for all of us (as God’s children) to go and “*see him*” – to go and see Jesus.

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

–II–

6. Of course, the sad truth is that, just as happened 2000 years ago, *we* often miss seeing him today, as well, even when he’s right in our very midst – And why is that? Why do we sometimes miss seeing Jesus, even at Christmas time?

7. Well, first of all, we miss him sometimes because we’re just too busy.

A--You know, on that first Christmas Eve it could be that the angels and heavenly host tried to tell the innkeeper about the birth, but he was too busy looking after his other guests.

1--Perhaps they tried to tell the crowds of Bethlehem that God himself was asleep (and probably crying) in their little town, but they were too wrapped up in their own affairs and needs to notice a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes.

2--The next day business went on as usual, few realizing the significance of what had just taken place there.

B--I wonder:...

1--...Are WE today sometimes so busy at Christmas with baking and decorating and 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?

8. Another reason we sometimes fail to see 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 people expected to find God in the flesh.

1--A palace or fortress in Jerusalem, or even in Rome, would have been a more appropriate place for the birth of the King of kings.

2--But no one (not even the shepherds) expected God’s coming to happen as it did.

B--In the same way, sometimes we miss seeing Jesus today because we, too, look for him in the wrong places and manners.

1--We look for him in fancy 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.”

3--And, of course, he IS found in these -- but the Christmas story teaches us that he is not found ONLY in these.

C--Instead, it teaches us that if we look carefully, we can find and see Jesus even in the *unexpected places* and *unexpected people* of life.

1--...We can SEE him even in the pain, the suffering, the grief, and the need of life.

2--...We can SEE him even in those people who’ve hurt or offended us in some way.

3--...and we can SEE him even in the poor, the outcast, and in those who’re different from us, and who are not necessarily “socially acceptable.”

--III--

9. You see, Christmas reminds us that just as God came to earth 2000 years ago as a tiny, vulnerable baby, so God comes and appears to and among us today wearing many guises.

A--[Story of Daddy Who Gave Son Light]

One evening as little Johnny went to bed, it began thundering and lightening outside. After a while, his father went upstairs to check on him with a flashlight. As he was in the room, a clap of thunder woke Johnny up with a start. Seeing the light, he was scared, and cried out, "Who is it?!"

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

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

C--You see, whether we're 2 or 102, “*Some Children [of God] See Him*” at Christmas because they open their hearts to experience his birth again in their *lives* – do YOU see Him this night in yours?

10. [PRAY]

11. [Solo: “*Some Children See Him Black and White*”]

12. [HYMN: #239, “Silent Night”, followed by 1st Verse of #246, “Joy to the World”]