**Do You See What I See?**
Luke 2:1-20

Have you ever wondered what you would have seen that night in Bethlehem when Christ was born? Would you have heard angels singing or simply the sounds of barnyard animals shifting around. Would you have seen the star in the sky or simply two frightened kids who had just become parents. Would you have felt the presence of God in the form of a child, or simply the chill of a cold east wind?

I’m convinced that **the people who were present in Bethlehem experienced that night in a wide variety of ways**. That’s the way it is in life. How I experience an event is different from how you experience an event. And in terms of God’s revelation of Himself to us, we’re never forced to believe. God allows us a choice. Some will say “It’s a miracle”, while others say “It’s a coincidence."

I’m of the opinion that most people in Jerusalem that day didn’t understand what was happening that night. The choirs of angels were drowned out by the haggling and trading going on in the Jerusalem bazaar. The bright star in the sky was appreciated only because it made travel at night easier. Most people, I’m convinced, were preoccupied with their lives.

In one of the *All in the Family* episodes Edith and Archie are attending Edith's high school class reunion. Edith encounters an old classmate by the name of Buck who, unlike his earlier days, had now become excessively obese. Edith and Buck have a delightful conversation about old times and the things that they did together, and true to who she is Edith doesn't notice how extremely heavy Buck has become.

Later, Edith says in her whiny voices "Archie, ain't Buck a beautiful person." Archie looks at her with a disgusted expression and says: "You’re a pip, Edith. You know that. You and I look at the same guy and you see a beautiful person and I see a blimp.” Edith gets a puzzled expression on her face and says something unknowingly profound, "Yeah, ain't it too bad."

**What we experience in life depends not as much on the events that take place but rather who we are as people in the midst of those events**. It’s not what’s out there but what’s in here that shapes our view of things. I try to keep that in mind when people criticize and ridicule me. I try to understand that they’re anger toward me grows from dissatisfaction within themselves.

Many of you are familiar with Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol.” Remember the scene where Christmas Past has just paid a very discomforting visit to Ebenezer Scrooge. Scrooge is clearly shaken by the entire ordeal. But when he wakes up, he doesn’t take the message to heart. He dismisses it by saying: “Bah, humbug! It wasn’t real. Just a bit of last night’s undigested beef.” A vision to be taken to heart or simple indigestion? You tell me?

Oh, you say, had I been there at Bethlehem I would have seen, I would have understood. Perhaps. But let me ask you this: When you watch the 6:00 news do you see chaos and strife, or do you see sheep without a Shepherd? When you went out to do your shopping for Christmas amidst the hordes of people, did you notice the worried expressions on some of their faces?

What did you hear this Christmas? Did you hear the music and carols, or did you sense the silent sighs of the lonely and the bereaved who may be dreading Christmas because it accentuates their loneliness? And in the midst of the sounds of honking horns and people arguing over parking places, did you hear the feint sound of laughter from poor children because you furnished a toy.

You see, **so often what we see and what we hear depends less upon what’s happening around you and more on what’s happening in you**.

If you did in fact hear the cry from the lonely, the laughter of poor children; if you did in fact see sheep without a shepherd, then perhaps you might just have understood the events that unfolded in Bethlehem that night.

In the end perhaps one of our carols says it best: “No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin. Where meek souls shall receive him still, the dear Christ child enters in.”

May your soul, this night, be meek that the Christ child may enter.