

Sermon: Christmas Eve 2018

Rev. Mark Moline 12/24/18

'Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy,
Do you hear what I hear ringing through the sky, shepherd boy,
Do you hear what I hear
A song, high above the trees with a voice as big as the sea

Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king,
Do you know what I know in your palace warm, mighty king,
Do you know what I know
A Child, shivers in the cold
Let us bring him silver and gold

Said the king to the people everywhere
listen to what I say
Pray for peace, people everywhere
Listen to what I say
The Child, sleeping in the night
He will bring us goodness and light

Do you hear what I hear. Our appointed Psalm for this Christmas eve, says
"Zion hears and is glad."

While I place No particular theological value to this notion, I've always
considered Easter to be a more visual Holiday while Christmas is more audial.
Even the silence of that Holy night carries a great message of Peace.

The Easter silence of an empty tomb carries no such message. Occupied or
empty, the silence of a tomb is the same. Its beauty is to be realized in
seeing its emptiness. The women-folk found the empty tomb and ran to tell
the men. Just hearing wasn't good enough for the listeners - so they ran to
see the stone rolled away and the tomb empty.

Likewise, afterwards the risen savior appears to a room full of his followers, -
--- and they later tell the absent Thomas. Again just hearing is insufficient -
and Thomas says, "I won't believe it unless I see it with my own eyes."

Christmas, on the other hand seems to be all about hearing. Do you hear what I hear, ----- do you hear the angels singing alleluia; do you hear their proclamation, "I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people: to you is born this day in the City of David a savior who is the Messiah, the Lord."

Do you hear the angels? No I don't hear,----- all I can hear is that crying baby, sounds like its coming from the stable. If it would just be quiet and stop crying, maybe then I could hear the Christmas angels.

One of my most favorite Christmas gifts ever - came from a friend a few years ago. It is a set of electronic earmuffs that amplifies any sound under 82 decibels and blocks out any sound over that limit. They protect my ears from loud noises.

In other words, they let me hear only what I want to hear. There are those who would say I've been doing that with my natural hearing for years now - but I deny it and don't even listen to that kind of accusation.

Selective listening is rude behavior, but it is downright dangerous when it comes to listening to God. We need to hear all God has for us, not just what we want to hear. The beautiful and mighty Christmas angels are just the messengers. The humble baby lying in a livestock feed trough is the Christmas message. That baby is the living word of God.

Do you hear what I hear? I wonder, on this silent night can you hear the baby's cry. Can you hear the voice of God? Theologian Paul Tillich writes: "The first duty of love is to listen."

I suspect we have all been guilty from time to time of not listening to those who love us most. Our spouses, our parents, our children, OUR GOD.

This Holy and silent night, do you hear the baby crying there in the cold darkness of what life can become? Do you know that baby loves you dearly?

"The first duty of love is to listen."