

THROUGH ANGEL EYES

What Did the Angels See at Christmas?

(Introduction to the Series)

Text: Luke 2:8-14

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Christmas season is upon us again. Even before we'd finished up all of the Halloween candy or polished off the Thanksgiving spread, our world it seems is rushing us toward the Christmas morning ahead. How many of you were among the millions who went out before dawn on Friday or sat before a computer screen on Saturday filling up a shopping cart? Who of us is feeling a bit behind that zealous neighbor who's somehow already managed to pick up a tree, hang some greens, or lay out the lights? Some of you ARE that neighbor!

Every year, it seems, the season moves faster, the frenzy gets louder, the calendar fuller. It's a fabulous time of year in so many ways, but one that always brings a spiritual challenge with it. With all the noise and glitter, with all there is to do and all the places to go, how do you keep before you or your loved ones the deeper meaning of this season? How do we gain or maintain a vision of the person and work of God that is the most beautiful and life-blessing core of Christmas at its best?

When I was growing up, my family used to set in the corner of our living room each December a twelve-foot Christmas tree. It was so high that it took a tall step-ladder to decorate the upmost branches. On the top, my dad or mom would place this beautiful angel ornament. The angel had a spreading gown that hid a plastic cone that fit nicely over the pinnacle of the tree. I remember looking up from the foot of that huge evergreen and envying that angel sometimes. I wished I could sit atop of that tree with her. I wondered what our living room and our family looked like on Christmas morning from her point of view.

As I've gotten older, that wondering has grown larger in my mind and quite a bit deeper in significance. The fact that you are listening to me this morning instead of out at the Mall suggests that you don't want to look at Christmas merely from a Madison Avenue level. You don't want to see it through the eyes of Scrooge or the Grinch or even mainly from Santa's point of view. Most of us are pretty good at trying to look at Christmas from from a child's vantage point. In past years, you may have joined me or some other preacher in trying to look at it from the viewport of Mary or Joseph, the shepherds or the wise men. But what if we could actually see Christmas from a much greater height? What if we could see it through angel eyes? What would we see?

The Gospel of Luke says that at the first Christmas ⁸ **There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.** ⁹ **An *angel* of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.** ¹⁰ **But the *angel* said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.** ¹¹ **Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.** ¹² **This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."** ¹³ **Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,** ¹⁴ **"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."**

What did the angels see at Christmas that made them explode in the skies with praise? What was it about the birth of a particular child to a peasant family in the back woods of this world that made a host of angelic warriors delirious with joy and desperate to communicate it to all who would listen? And how do you and I catch that vision ourselves so that Christmas isn't just another job for us, not just another quaint tradition for us, not just another passing season for us – but actually an encounter with the glory of God so penetrating and powerful that it brings forth in us the unshakable joy and abide peace for which we most deeply yearn?

That's what I want to find out for myself and share with you in these weeks ahead. Led by the Scriptures, we are going to try to scale God's tree together and catch a glimpse of the splendor of Christmas from a height we may never have viewed it before. We are going to gaze at God, ourselves, and Christmas through angel eyes. I invite you to make that climb with me and invite your friends and neighbors along.

Reflection Questions

1. What might be fundamentally different about the way that an angel and a human being might view the events of Christmas?
2. As you read Luke 2:8-14, what seems to be the source of the angels' excitement?
3. What are you in danger of NOT seeing as you go through this Christmas season?