

Do You Hear What I Hear?



Scripture:

Matthew 21:11-17

¹¹The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

¹²Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves. ¹³He said to them, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer"; but you are making it a den of robbers.'

¹⁴The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. ¹⁵But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the children crying out in the temple, 'Hosanna to the Son of David', they became angry ¹⁶and said to him, 'Do you hear what they are saying?' Jesus said to them, 'Yes; have you never read, "Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself"?'

¹⁷He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.



SIGNS OF SOMETHING CELESTIAL

Before Jesus' birth there were rumors circulating. What were the rumors? That something celestial was about to happen. It would be a change that was both cosmic and far reaching. There were signs:

- **THERE WERE NATURAL EVENTS:** Astrologers reported a new star was rising in the sky that shown with increasing brightness. People interpreted the signs in the skies to point to this time and place. Learned men set out from Petra to see where this would lead.
- **THERE WERE GENEALOGICAL EVENTS:** Two of the Gospels list Jesus' family, dating back to the time of King David, and further to the patriarch's and the first humans. Genealogical charts said the time was right for a spiritual awakening. The Messiah would arrive in the next generation. His parents would be linked to King David.

- **THERE WERE POLITICAL EVENTS:** THE Hebrews needed a savior to save them from the Romans. They also needed to be saved from their own top-heavy religious bureacracy. When conditions get frantic, people often turn to fundamentalism, just as the Jews had done. But Jewish fundamentalism and its stict insistance on law rather than love, and upon tradition rather than encounter with God, was not going to save the faith, nor save those who practiced it.
- **THERE WERE SPIRITUAL EVENTS:** An angel appeared to Joseph, then to Mary, and to Mary's cousin Eliabeth and Zechariah. There were dreams too. Joseph's dream forecast the birth of the child. The name to be given was Immanuel, "he will save his people."

**PEOPLE WATCHED;
PEOPLE LISTENED FOR THE MESSIAH**

Something was in the wind, something was in the air, something was stirring within the people. This was a magical time. Something spiritual was expected. People watched. People listened. They visited among the spiritual leaders. They talked to the politicians.

There were signs, and the signs pointed to the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven -- a spiritual peace among the people that they had not seen in generations. It would happen during the reign of Herod.

"DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?"

One of my favorite Christmas songs tells about the signs, and expresses the hope for the peace of Christmas. "Do You Hear What I Hear?" tells about the signs, the stirring in the wind, the hopes of the shepherd, the wisdom of the king, and the peace that the Messiah would bring.

Susan Boyle has a new Christmas album on which she records this song. Susan Boyle is the awkward young woman from England who almost won the national talent search with her singing of "I Dreamed a Dream." Simon Cowell, one of the judges, discovered her, and helped her with her first album. This year her Christmas album has been available for about four weeks, and it is the number one album in the country.

Have you heard it? It has several great spiritual and uplifting tunes on it, and if you are going to buy some new music this year to get into the Christmas spirit, this is the one to buy.

I am going to play some of the Christmas music from this album over the next three weeks, and I hope you enjoy these Advent songs as much as I did when I first heard them. Maybe you, too, will be awakened and stirred.

The words to the four verses of "Do You Hear What I Hear?" are in the bulletin. They will be projected on the screen so you can follow along. We'll talk about them in about three minutes.

**"DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?"
WRITTEN BY NOEL REGNEY
MUSIC BY GLORIA SHAYNE BAKER
OCTOBER 1962**

Said the night wind to the little lamb,
Do you see what I see?
Way up in the sky little lamb,
Do you see what I see?
A star, a star dancing in the night
With a tail as big as a kite,
With a tail as big as a kite.

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, a song High above the tree
With a voice as big as the sea,
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, a child shivers in the cold
Let us bring him silver and gold,
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, the child sleeping in the night
He will bring us goodness and light.
He will bring us goodness and light.

WHAT'S MISSING HERE?

What's missing here in Susan Boyle's version? Verse four is missing. Did Simon Cowell leave this out because the song was too long? Was the fourth verse too controversial? Did the producers just not want to interfere with the sweet and sentimental part, rather than letting it be the prophetic and personal anthem that it was written to be?

The fourth verse that is omitted from this recording is the verse that the composer Noel Regney thought would be the climax of the song. When it was recorded by Robert Goulet some time ago, Regney told him he wanted Goulet to nearly shout it.

Here's the story of "Do You Hear What I Hear?" from the obituary of Noel Regney that appeared in the New York Times at the time of his death a few years ago.

"Do You Hear What I Hear?" is a Christmas song written in October 1962 with lyrics by Noël Regney and music by Gloria Shayne Baker. They were married at the time, and they wrote it as a plea for peace during the Cuban Missile Crisis. It has sold tens of millions of copies and has been covered by hundreds of different artists.

Mr. Regney wrote these lyrics as a clear and plaintive plea for peace at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, in October 1962. His favorite version was Robert Goulet's. When Mr. Goulet came to the line "Pray for peace, people, everywhere," he almost shouted the words.

"I am amazed that people can think they know the song -- and not know it is a prayer for peace," Mr. Regney said in an interview in The New York Times in 1985. "But we are so bombarded by sound and our attention spans are so short that we now listen only to catchy beginnings."

"...This was my chance to write a Christmas song for myself," Mr. Regney later recalled. "I had thought I'd never write a Christmas song: Christmas had become so commercial. But this was the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the studio, the producer was listening to the radio to see if we had been obliterated."

"Walking home to my apartment on East 52nd Street, I saw two mothers with their babies in strollers. The babies were looking at each other and smiling, and all of a sudden, my mood was extraordinary." He sat down, wrote the lyrics and handed them to his wife, who wrote the tune. "Noel wrote a beautiful song and I did the music," Gloria Shayne said in 1999. "We couldn't sing it through; it broke us up."

(Noel Regney was born in Strasbourg, France, on Aug. 19, 1920, a son of the late Xavier and Bertha Saur Schlinger. He studied at the university and the conservatory in Strasbourg, at the Salzburg Mozarteum, and at the Conservatoire National de Paris. During World War II, he was a fighter in the

French underground and with Allied Forces. Mr. Regney began his career as musical director of the Indochinese Service of Radio France from 1948 to 1950 and also worked as director of the Lido nightclub in Paris. In 1951, he left France to take a world tour as musical director for French singer Lucienne Boyer... He created radio jingles and soon began writing songs with Ms. Shayne.)

So let's sing verse four together. Let verse four reflect our own circumstances, and the peace we are looking for.

What are we listening for at Christmas?

What is God's message to us this year?

**Said the king to the people everywhere
Listen to what I say
Pray for peace people everywhere
Listen to what I say
The child, the child
Sleeping in the night
He will bring us goodness and light.**

The angel's words in Luke 2:14 were, "Peace on earth good will toward people." They were, "Peace among humans with whom [God] is pleased."

Peace at Christmas was never intended to be an inoffensive cliché that feels good to say, and means little to anyone. It was intended to be real and world changing.

It is true that harmony among nations this year is a hope but not a reality. But peace must be more than the absence of war.

**Peace and justice are twins.
We begin with making peace with God,
and seeking peace within our families,
and working for peace in our community.**

Peace is more than ending the war against terrorism. That is surely our priority this year. But there is something antagonistic about the way we live that turns shoppers into combatants, and sells unhealthy food to families with children because there is a profit to be made.

There is little peace in the lives of men and women everywhere. But let us discover peace at Christmas by seeking to discover peace with God.

Jesus Christ was born so that we can be reconciled through Him. When we accept that gift, which is wrapped and waiting under the tree of life, He promises to come in and dwell with us.

**There can be no peace without God.
The peace of Christmas
is not a mere absence of strife,
but the active experience of a
harmony with God that promotes
total healing and reconciliation
regardless of circumstance.**

I love Susan Boyle's new version of this classic hymn. Yet we cannot leave out the fourth verse of the song that reminds us of what we are watching for at Christmas. We are watching for peace, and we are willing to make peace, and we know that peace is ever more difficult. Wouldn't that be a miracle?

Faith is not a history, but a presence of God right now. If we do not believe that God is watching with us now, then we cannot believe that God was with the people of the scriptures long ago. Peace is the first word, and it is the last word of Advent.



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