

Christmas Is for Your Ears, and for Your Eyes, and for Your Mouth

- Envision scenario: early Xmas, dark, 8 yrs, bed. Wake, ears, sound, parents moving gifts from closet to tree; ears hear father, hallway, Lk 2 KJV. Out bed, eyes, see brightly lit tree, other lights off, beautiful; mouth, excited chatter, lot of thank yous, every year mom's same coffee cake. Christmas like for me. Don't know if my experience was anything like yours, but for me: EEM.
- Morning continued: always church, somehow joy from morning made easier to concentrate. Ears, listen carefully to sermon, choir. Eyes, church brightly lit, Xmas lights on (night before church beautiful in dark, candlelight), but morning beautiful in light. Mouth, sing dozens of stanzas Xmas hymns. My experience as child; probably very similar to yours today. EEM.
- Some you every Sunday members; others family back in town, welcome back; others members, long time since been to church, glad here today; some guests joining us for first time at SJB, postcard, came, welcome, honor. Christmas not about presents, coffee cake, pretty lights; is celebration of birth of JC, Son God, left heaven, became human to save humans from their sin. What Christmas is all about. Why here today: worship newborn Savior. As we do, consider ancient prophecy from OT book of Isaiah, today Is 52, passage of Bible that shows: EEM.
- First ears. **Vs. 8ab** (ears). Picture here: city at war, surrounded by mnts, all soldiers from city off over mnts fighting the war, all people left in city on high alert; nervous; don't know how battle going; don't know if husbands/sons still alive; worried that at any moment enemy army march over mnts, advance against their defenseless city. So watchmen in towers, on city walls; day/night carefully search horizon, watching for any sign of movement. Then, **vs. 8ab**. "Our soldiers coming back; war over; we won; have peace, freedom." Rejoicing, singing; good news has reached ears.
- Christmas for ears. **Vs. 8ab**. Today Christmas Gospel proclaimed in every Christian church in world. Christ Savior born. Long awaited Messiah, desire of nations, one who will bring peace, has finally come. All Advent long prayed, "Come, LJ, come." Now he has come, born for us in Bethlehem, our Savior. Listen to your watchmen; to Isaiah; to John ("**Word became flesh...Seen his glory...grace, truth**") – that's Jesus. Listen carefully to words of these Christmas hymns, Scripture lessons, this sermon. God speaks to us through his Word: written Word and Word made flesh. Listen to Christmas Gospel; we have peace; Savior is born; Christmas for ears.
- For eyes. **Vs. 8c**. In OT everyone wanted to see Messiah. But couldn't see him; yet to come. As NT Christians, we can rejoice because we can see our Savior. At Christmas, finally see him come. We can look into manger; see Mary holding baby; can see shepherds standing nearby; look into angel-filled sky; can look into face of Son of God. More than that, can even see his life unfold before our eyes. Can see him sinlessly living as substitute; dying on cross; coming back to life; ascending into heaven. We can see Jesus, because **vs. 8c**. Christmas for your eyes.
- Not only for your eyes, but also for eyes of everyone in world. **Vs. 10**. What will they see with eyes? God rolling up sleeves. Ever see picture of Rosie the Riveter; red bandana, blue shop clothes, sleeves rolled up, muscle flexed, to show strength. Anytime someone rolls up sleeve, flexes bicep, that's show of strength. Here Isaiah say God is rolling up sleeves, flexing his bicep, and showing off his strength for all to see. **Vs. 10**. Everyone will see God's strength. Funny way to show his strength. Baby is anything but strong; cute, cuddly, adorable; not strong. Baby born at Christmas is different. This baby: created universe; set stars in place, planets in orbit; breathes life into humans, guides affairs of whole world; someday will judge everyone who's ever lived. This baby is strong. Doesn't always look strong: in manger, on cross doesn't look strong. But in the birth, death, res of JC, **vs 10**. That's what God wants you to see today in manger: your salvation. Christmas is for eyes.

- And for mouth. Vs. 7. Notice: all actions of mouth. With his mouth, messenger (came running over mnts, that watchmen saw) proclaimed, shouted, heralded, cried out, preached, explained, verbalized the good news that victory won, city at peace. Then watchmen did same thing for people of city; then people of city did same thing for each other. Good news has ripple effect; hear it, then tell it.
- That's what we as Christians do at Christmas: hear it, then tell it. We hear good news that Savior born for us, then go and tell it: on mnt, over hills, everywhere – Christ the Savior is born. Even tell God! Not like he doesn't know. But when we tell God what he's done, what it means to us, that's worship. Worship starts in heart, comes out mouth, as we verbalize (in liturgy, song) what God has done for us. And at Christmas we have much to verbalize. God and sinners are reconciled. **So vs. 9.** So we sing, proclaim, shout, herald, cry out, preach, explain, verbalize that God of heaven/earth, who is lying in manger has come to be with people. Christmas for mouth.
- For EEM. Was for shepherds: heard message of angels, saw little Lord Jesus asleep on hay, told folks of Bethlehem who born that night. Christmas for ears, eyes, mouth. Is for us, too. We need to hear Jesus, in his Word, as he speaks to us. Need to hear Christmas Gospel, again and again, with ears, so that God's Spirit can sink that peace deep into our souls. We need to see Jesus with eyes, of faith. Means we need to see through all traditions, trappings that come with Christmas, like presents, travelling, food – none of which are bad, but all of which must be secondary to seeing Jesus with eyes of faith, lying in manger, Son of God, our Savior. Need to verbalize Jesus, with mouths, in our worship (by way: Christians worship Jesus regularly, not just Christmas and Easter, but regularly); and in our proclamation. Don't be afraid to take joy you feel today and share with someone else. No better Christmas gift than giving someone the Christmas Gospel. Christmas is for EEM. May Lord Jesus Christ fill your ears, eyes, mouth, heart, whole being with his peace.

Isaiah 52:7-10

⁷How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

⁸Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. ⁹Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.