

“Can You See It?” – December 11, 2016
by Wayne J. Schneider – Gloria in Excelsis Deo

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St. Luke 1:8–23, 57–64

Christmas presents a chance to get in touch with your mystical self. Each of us has the opportunity to be a mystic. Simply stand still and watch a sunset and your mysticism will begin. Thomas Moore says, *“An Essential ingredient is wonder and the capacity to become absorbed, to lose yourself for a moment in wonder and contemplation.”*

The Advent Season is a good time to test your Spiritual Posture. If you are like me, you tend to slump into pointless busyness, rather than moving into straight-up spiritual action. Advent action is a longing for God, a yearning for the coming of the Christ Child. Last week we said that we have a tremendous “kneed.” Today, we seek Christmas with “our eyes wide open.”

If we are not careful we can become “closed in.” The weather this past week made it easy to want to ‘stay in;’ and the routines and concerns of Christmas can make us feel “locked in.” Advent is an invitation to an uncluttered life. God loves to march into the lives of people who think they have their lives completely programmed, locked up; and then God clicks the garage door opener.

That is a good idea to make some plans!

To Joe the carpenter, God said you will be a father, but not on your own. To Mary, God said you will be a miraculous mother. And to Mary’s elderly aunt Liz, you will bear a child too. Life is not static; God’s call is always to be open.

Jesus says, *“Those who have eyes to see, let them see.”* Look at what is right in front of you. Be aware. Zechariah was confronted by the angel Gabriel, and because he was ‘not looking,’ he temporarily could not speak. It’s a peculiar penalty isn’t it?”

Zechariah is a priest and his job is to lead worship and bless people. He would exit the sanctuary, raise his arms and utter a blessing. When prompted to name his son John, Zechariah's tongue is set free.

Advent proclaims the coming of God with us, but we struggle to see the indications of God's presence. Why is it so difficult? Perhaps because it appears to be too good to be true. I feel it when Mary meets Gabriel. After 'freaking out' she asks, "*Why me? You are not serious. What makes me special?*" Bad news is so common that when good news happens, we approach it as if it comes from the mouth of a used car salesperson. If we were standing alongside Zechariah we probably would have responded the same way: "*How can this be? I'm an old geezer and my wife is a senior citizen?*"

How will we know when God arrives? Our world is always on the edge of war, and we seem to be perennially one day from unemployment, or one family crisis from chaos. Friends and family become ill and die; children suffer, marriages fail, and evil exists. Where is God in all of this? I want to believe the angel's message, but sometimes it's difficult. If Gabriel arrived right now I might call for five firefighters to throw him out! What he proclaims sounds too good to be true. Why is it hard for us to see the truth? It might be that we are fearful of what we may develop into if we actually see. If we accept things, we understand that we have to agree to take their consequences too. Doctors see this all of the time. Patients have a lump in their breast, a pain in their stomach, or a sore throat; but pretend it is not serious. When they finally go to their physician and she asks, "*Why did you wait so long?*" the patient responds, "*Because I was afraid of what it might be.*" When we surrender ourselves to God, life will be different. It may be uncertain as God often calls us to live on the edge of life. Zechariah's life could not possibly be the same, when he became the aged father of the messenger of the Messiah.

Its kind of weird when you think of it. Wonderfully weird, though. God comes to us, especially at Advent. God summons us to open our eyes to the Messiah's arrival. Babies are so innocent and loved. A snug symbol for God approaching us: charming to look at, delicate to touch, and safe. On a different level, it is scandalous! God, whom we assume is going to make a show of force and set the nation straight; but in humility the Messiah comes in the most vulnerable way. This means that God rules in agape love, and that you and I must live, not in power, but in love and self-sacrifice. This is, of course, not the way of the world. But if our eyes are opened, and we see the Advent Child, we must make sure our lifestyle is not the same as the world's. With open eyes we see ourselves as we are: the forgiven daughters and sons of God. We have been liberated to live for this spectacular God if, with eyes wide open, we see God for who God is.

The season of Advent is a period of purified sight. A challenge to place ourselves with Zechariah the priest at the altar, with our mouths shut and our eyes open. One way counsellors assist troubled people is by active listening. Effective therapists listen attentively to their clients. You cannot be observant with your mouth open. This applies to Advent as well.

This is indorsed by the beloved Christmas carol "*O Little Town of Bethlehem.*" Verse 3 sings: "*How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is giv'n! So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heav'n. No ear may hear His coming; but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in.*"

Our kneed today is to see God; to find the silence in the middle of the noise; to picture the Holy Light in the darkness of the world. God IS here, waiting to speak with you.

You may see the Presence in a sister or a brother in the chair next to you. The signs are everywhere if you open your eyes.

The Bethlehem Baby enters our world this year as He does each year. He comes to us not only in worship, Holy Communion, and Holy Baptism, but

He is active in our daily lives too. The ultimate question is: will we see God?
Are our eyes open? Alleluia. Amen.