

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

December 25, 2022

Do You See What I See?

Selected Scriptures

Thirteen years ago I spoke about a Christmas song. It was a song that was released in 1962. It has since been recorded hundreds of times over by artists as varied as Bing Crosby and Bob Dylan. The song is entitled "Do you see what I see?" and I'm sure most of you are familiar with it. I'm actually far more intrigued with the title than I am with the song because it got me thinking about Christmas and how differently it is seen by different people.

"Do you see what I see?" It is a very legitimate question when it comes to Christmas because many people see Christmas differently. To retailers it is the holy grail that determines whether or not their year is successful. To students it is that much-needed break that comes after finals that gives them a month or so downtime before the next semester. To families it's a time to get together, to renew old ties, to revisit old memories. To Christians it's a time to pause and reflect on the enormity of the idea that God would become one of us, that he would leave heaven itself, enter into human flesh, and again, the whole idea that he would do that,

become a helpless baby born in a manger is just beyond belief. So Christmas is about incarnation.

So "Do you see what I see" is a very legitimate question, when it comes to Christmas. So I want to look at a number of different people all in the scripture who might see the incarnation in profoundly different ways, and so I'm going to read a lot of scripture to you in the process of doing that.

So first I want to look at the shepherds. It says: *And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."* And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*

So just picture the scene that's unfolding. It's a cold, clear night and the shepherds are doing just what shepherds are supposed

to be doing and suddenly an angel appears and Isaiah's prophesy after thousands and thousands of years is beginning to unfold. Isaiah said: *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.*

And so the sky begins to light up with the glory of God itself and the glory begins to shine all around them. What do you think somebody else walking out on that very same night looking up at the sky, what do you think they would see? My guess is they would see nothing. I mean the entire sky has lit up, there are myriads of angels celebrating; to the average human eyes I believe it would appear as if nothing is going on. We know for a fact that human eyes can only see a certain wavelength of light. We have ultraviolet light which is above it or infrared light which is below it. We also know that there's creatures like the mantis shrimp that have eyes that are equipped to see in both of those ranges, things that we cannot see. Well the same is true in the spiritual range. You know when Elisha the prophet was being sought by the king of Syria, he and his servants, they found themselves surrounded by the chariots of the king and his servant cried out, "We're doomed!" This is the way Elisha responded.

It says: *Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his*

eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. And when the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed to the LORD and said, "Please strike this people with blindness." So he struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha. So we know God can give sight and we know he can take it away and clearly we know God gave sight to the shepherds. They saw probably what nobody else could see and they reacted exactly the way you would expect them to react. They were terrified. The angel says: *Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

So the sky's been lit up like it's midday and there's this single angel and he's now been accompanied by thousands and thousands of other angels, there's a multitude of the heavenly host and they're all praising God, but to who is this all directed? This tiny little group of shepherds. This is a despised subclass of human beings.

Randy Alcorn says: "The Mishnah, Judaism's written record of the oral law, also reflects this prejudice, referring to shepherds in belittling terms. One passage describes them as 'incompetent';

another says no one should ever feel obligated to rescue a shepherd who has fallen into a pit. Smug religious leaders maintained a strict caste system at the expense of shepherds and other common folk. Shepherds were officially labeled 'sinners'—a technical term for a class of despised people."

How perfectly appropriate for God to announce his presence on earth to lowly shepherds. It wasn't to kings, it wasn't to princes, it wasn't to any royalty that this announcement of the coming king was made but to shepherds. This was a kingdom where nearly everything was upside down including the status of those who would receive the news. The lowest of status had the greatest of honors, they saw the entire sky light up with the effulgent glory of God himself, they saw host of angels praising God and saying: *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"* The angels are declaring this news to absolute nobodies, to the bottom rung of the social strata, folks who couldn't advance any agenda at all.

So just what was it that the shepherds saw? Well, they saw the incarnation, the beginning of an upside down kingdom where rules were unlike anything anyone had ever seen before, they exalted were humbled and the humbled were exalted. This was the beginning of a kingdom that almost no one else saw because only those who were

blessed by God could see it. And Jesus explained this phenomenon to his disciples many years later. This is what he said. He said: *"'For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'* But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear."

See in the 2,000 or so years since that was said nothing really has changed, hearts have grown even more dull, ears can still barely hear while eyes remain firmly shut. But those blessed by God, those whom God have blessed that way have the ability to see what largely escapes the rest of the world. The shepherd saw the sky on fire and a host of angels worshiping, an incredible sight.

Next we ask, what did Mary, what did Joseph see in the very first Christmas. Understand, Mary and Joseph, they also were visited by angels. I mean, Mary was told by an angel that she was blessed beyond what any human being has ever been blessed. And he came to her and said, *"Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"* But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, *"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you*

shall call his name Jesus."

So Mary takes in this disquieting news understanding that she's favored by God and chosen to bear Messiah who would save the world. Joseph also was struggling mightily. I mean we know our culture cares not a fig about whether or not you're married if you're pregnant but in Joseph's day that was a capital offense for a woman and was considered not only a great sin but one that would socially destroy you forever. Joseph had a solution. He would divorce her quietly so to avoid her being more severely punished. It was an option that this angel who spoke to Joseph told him not to take.

It says: Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

So both Joseph and Mary in spite of their humble state in life

received the most glorious news that human beings could ever receive. They would birth and parent the king of the universe, God become flesh. And as the great day of delivery approached I would imagine they would have anticipated some sort of glorious entry of the king into this world, and as we all know it was anything but. They saw hardship, they saw exclusion, actually they saw misery. And I can't help but wonder what thoughts must have been going through Mary and Joseph's mind as they went through the cattle car process of registration.

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.

Now you got to understand not only did Mary and Joseph have to go all the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem but they had to do it in Mary's ninth month of pregnancy. That's a trip of about 90 miles. From Port Jervis you can figure it's from here to Wilkes Barre or the Jersey shore or somewhere up around Albany. Now think of this

journey not in a car with climate control and cell phones and Spotify but on the back of a donkey or a camel, if you could even afford that. Today it takes us about an hour and a half, two hours to go 90 miles in absolute comfort. It took them about a week, traveling in a way that was extremely dangerous. They didn't have lighted rest stops, they didn't have food courts, they didn't have State Police cars going up and down the highway; instead they had thieves and robbers and assorted wild animals. But again you got to remember Mary is about to deliver. And when they finally arrive in Bethlehem after what had been a brutal trip, they were met with a classic "there's no room in the inn." And we all know the story, we know how romanticized it is in creches and nativities but they wound up, thanks to someone's pity, with Mary in advanced labor delivering her baby in either a cave or a barn. And the facts are it was hostile, it was brutal, it was incredibly degrading.

So what did Mary and Joseph see in the incarnation? Now remember they both received direct revelation from God, they were the mother and stepfather not just of royalty but of supernaturally divine royalty. And what they saw was the beginning of the kingdom of God on earth and it was a kingdom unlike any other kingdom the earth had ever seen before. It was a kingdom in which nearly everything was upside down. The king and the creator and sustainer of the universe was making his grand entrance into flesh through them and

they were seeing firsthand that it was anything but grand. God had made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. They saw a kingdom that almost no one else saw and they paid a price that no one else has paid. It included living with a scandal of being considered a woman who bore a child out of wedlock. Mary and Joseph would carry that scandal with them for the rest of their lives. In fact we focus into an argument that takes place some thirty years later. Jesus is arguing with the religious leaders and they argue back what had been whispered for years. *They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God."* See, Mary and Joseph saw that being citizens of the kingdom of God oftentimes meant struggle and it oftentimes meant hardship.

And next we take a look at King Herod. What did he see in the incarnation? Well he saw only a political threat. I mean he feared and hated the idea of a Messiah. It says: *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."* When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, *"In Bethlehem*

of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."

Now Herod by all objective standards was a paranoid monster. He was married ten times and he had many, many children, most of whom he executed, fearing that they would overthrow him. His Roman contemporary Augustus picked up on the Jewish aversion to pork, and he once said, "It is far better to be Herod's pig than to be one of his sons." Try to imagine how Herod reacted to hearing the wise men say: *"Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."*

So Herod tells them a bold-faced lie, that he would love to come and worship this king as well. And when he finds that the wise men have ignored his plea and returned to their homeland after seeing the child, he breaks into a rage and he demands the execution of every male child two years or younger. See Herod saw the incarnation and all he saw was his annihilation. He saw this as a

gigantic threat to his own existence. He knew there could be only one king and he intended to be that king himself.

Well, the next one -- or I should say the next ones that we could ask, "Do you see what I see?" are the wise men, that's the Magi. Those change men from the East who were sent by Herod to find the one whose star had risen and guide them to the king. *After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.*

Now there's much discussion over how old Jesus was when the Magi came to visit him when they came bringing gold, frankincense and myrrh. Some say he must have been two years old because that's the age that Herod went after, but again it's also been said that an intemperate man like Herod would tend to cast a very wide net when trying to capture and kill a rival to his throne. So even if the child was a newborn it would be just like Herod to demand the death

of all the infants two years and younger just to make sure. So some say Jesus was older, some say he was younger but they all say he was an infant, but that doesn't explain all of the gifts that the Magi brought. Gold makes sense, I mean after all, they come to worship him who was to be the king of the Jews, so gold speaks of royalty, it speaks of kingship, it's a very appropriate gift. Frankincense speaks of worship. It's used primarily as a form of incense, it symbolized prayer, it symbolized worship. So gold speaks of royalty, frankincense speaks of worship, but myrrh spoke loudly of death. Myrrh was the gift that would have shocked and appalled parent of a newborn. I mean, the best way to understand myrrh is that it's a form of embalming spice. Whenever a body was prepared for burial it was prepared with certain spices and the chief spice that they used was myrrh. I mean it was clearly and unambiguously a symbol of death.

So what is it the Magi saw in the incarnation that made them bring a gift to the newborn that could only indicate death and burial? Perhaps they saw in the incarnation something far more profound than anyone else saw. Perhaps they saw a king whose primary role in coming to earth was not what people think of today. I mean today there's plenty of folks who will tell you that they see Jesus' role is that of a teacher, of a great example, a great philosopher, even a great political leader, anything but what he

really came for and that was to be a sacrifice. The real reason that Jesus came to this planet was to glorify his Father by obediently offering himself up as a sacrifice for the sins of his sheep, paying the price of his own blood in order to rescue us from the cost of sin.

So what do we see when we see the Magi presenting Mary and Joseph with the gift of myrrh? There were consciously or unconsciously proclaiming that this baby in his death represented the end of the warfare between God and his creation. I mean the angel had announced to the shepherds: *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."* I mean the reason why the angel declared peace is the same reason why any of our governments would declare peace. It would mean they found a way to end a war and that's exactly what the angel was declaring. Ever since the fall of Adam there had been this dividing wall separating man and God. The wall was made of the sin of man and the perfection of God and into that gap God had come in the flesh. Jesus Christ had come to offer himself as our substitute.

Ephesians tells us: *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.* See the Father, the Son and

the Holy Spirit had agreed before time had even begun that this was the only way that God could remain holy and still redeem the creatures that he loved. The wages of sin was death. And only a holy God just couldn't turn away and pretend that that was not the case. For us to be with him, someone had to absorb the wages of those sins. The holy One himself would leave heaven itself and take on human flesh in the form of a baby born in Bethlehem to Mary and Joseph. He would live a perfect life and then he would die in our place as our perfect substitute.

And whether the Magi knew it or not, they were paying homage to the child they worshiped as king through the gift of gold, they were paying homage to the God who was Lord through the gift of frankincense; and through the gift of myrrh they paid homage to the God who has come as a babe not just to teach or inspire or to lead, although he did all of that, but first and foremost who had come to die.

I think one thing we can see is that the Christmas question "Do you see what I see?" that's really a very open-ended question. I mean what you see in Christmas, what you see in the incarnation in the baby Jesus, well that's contingent on who you are. Mary and Joseph saw great tribulation, I mean, the shepherds saw great celestial glory, Herod saw annihilation, the wise men saw a king to honor, a

Lord to worship, and a sacrifice to prepare.

Well the next and final person we need to ask "Do you see what I see?" was the prophet Simeon. His declaration of what he saw in the baby Jesus is known as Simeon's song. *And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."* Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." And his father

and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Well the song is based on what Simeon said when he laid eyes on Jesus and he said, *"Let your servant depart in peace."* See, Simeon was a devout prophet in Israel; he'd been given the gift by the Holy Spirit of God, the gift of prophetic sight. It wasn't physical sight but instead it was the spiritual ability to answer the question "Do you see what I see?" like no one else could. I mean the Holy Spirit peeled back the veil and let Simeon see not just the big picture but what amounted to the grand picture because Simeon saw it all at once. He saw the tribulation of Joseph and Mary not just then but 33 years later when Mary would stand at the foot of the cross watching her son being executed. That's why he said, *"A sword will pierce through your own soul also."* He saw the same light of glory that lit up the sky for the shepherds and he described it as: *"A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."*

Simeon also saw the horror of the hatred that mankind would have towards their God. We saw that hatred crystallized in the butchery

of Herod and symbolized in the way he covered his hatred with a false veneer of the desire to worship. See, Herod represents every single one of us who are outside the kingdom of God and he represents us as murderous enemies of God. See there's no such thing as a spiritual Switzerland. There's no such thing as folks who think they're undecided or neutral about this babe who was born in a manger who feel they can safely wait to decide if he's really the Lord of their life, because God only gives us two choices: You are either a child of God or you are a child of the wrath of God.

God describes every one of us before we came to Christ with these words. He said: *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience -- among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.* That describes all of us, every single one of us including the sweetest, quietest, wouldn't hurt a flea type of person. God says all of us deeply resent any intrusion into our life by any authority other than ourselves, because truth be told we demand the absolute rule and authority over ourselves and we will not have king Jesus over us. I mean, there's a hatred that all unbelievers have that Jesus identified and summed up by saying:

No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Well Simeon saw that, and he said: *"Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed."* I mean he saw the whole of what the Magi only saw in parts. He saw the whole panoply of the kingdom of God advancing on earth through this eight-day-old baby boy that he's holding in his arms, and he saw it not just for his own Jewish nation but also in what was unheard of at the time, for all the Gentiles as well. And he said: *"For my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples."* Simeon had been patiently waited years for the Messiah to come. When he caught sight of Mary and Joseph bringing their baby boy into the temple, he knew instantly that his long wait was over. And this was Simeon's way of saying, Lord, my life has now realized its highest ambition and its greatest joy. He said: *"Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples."* He says, Lord, I'm ready to die so dismiss me now, he's saying, let me depart in peace.

I've got a question for us all this morning and that is have you

ever had that opportunity? Have you ever had that opportunity to say what Simeon said by those words, "*Now let your servant depart?*" Have you ever had a time like Simeon had? How about you, Thomas? A time that was so sublime that you doubted that your life would ever be the same, a time so sublime that you could say to the Lord, "Take me now because it doesn't get any better than this."

I mean, I confess the first time I had one of those moments is when God gave me the privilege of leading somebody to Christ, and again I've said this before, I thought, if I do nothing for the rest of my life, if I fall down and I'm a skid row bum, I still would have meaning and purpose in my life when I die because God gave me the privilege not just to ask but to be able to explain to another human being the answer to the question of Christmas, "Do you see what I see?"

So let me ask another question. Do we see what Simeon saw? See, we don't have to guess what Simeon saw because he told us. He said: "*For my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples.*" And here's perhaps the greatest gift that Christmas, it's given freely to all of us today, that is to every single one who believes, and that is that all of the vision that Simeon had and much more has been given physically to us. See, Simeon saw a fraction, a tiny fraction of what we see;

but all of that profound insight was given to him by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and it can't begin to match the vision that we've been given. It's a vision that enables us to understand why the kingdom would include the tribulation of Mary and Joseph and the glory of the shepherds and the bitterness of Herod and the celebration of the baby Jesus as King, Lord and sacrifice by the Magi. All of that vision and much, much more has been given wholesale to each of us in the kingdom.

See, when God asks us "Do you see what I see," we can say, yes, Lord, I do see what you see because you've given me your word. You've given me the holy Bible that enables me to see everything that Simeon saw. We can say what Peter said -- quote -- *concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

I've said it many times, we have what angels long to see in a book you can buy at the dollar store for a couple of bucks now. In this

book you can see the sweep of time that goes back before the dawn of creation to when the earth was without form and void. You can see Adam and Eve committing cosmic treason as they decide to defy God. You see them voluntarily entering into the world of sin, that same world that all of us have now involuntarily have been born into. We see God sovereignly choosing Abraham and from him calling out a whole nation whose line would culminate in that little baby born in Bethlehem.

I can see that little baby, God in the flesh now as a grown man of thirty choosing his disciples and teaching and healing and in working miracles, confounding the religious leaders of his day just like Herod was confounded with his love, his wisdom and his power. I can also watch their fear of annihilation produce a fury just like Herod's that ends up with them plotting his execution, an execution that he prophesied would take place precisely as it did. Again, *as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."*

See when God says, "Do you see what I see," I can say on the

authority of the word of God I can see the babe born in Bethlehem, having lived a life of absolute perfection now mocked and flogged and crucified. I see him exchanging his life of absolute perfection for my life of sin and rebellion. But this I can also see -- quote -- *"that he will be raised on the third day."*

And here's what I can also see, I can see by the very same Jesus who has given me in his word the whole scope of human history from before time began through the cross until the days that are still to come. I can see in this book right into the future, and I can see what Jesus says when he says: *"For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a*

testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

Simeon saw only a fraction of that vision and it was enough to have him say, *"Let your servant depart."* We've been given the whole counsel of God, the whole sweep of history from beginning to end. And God says: *"Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more."*

So the big question is does the world see what we see? It can't without us. For some of us helping the world see will include tribulation just like Mary and Joseph saw. For some it will be glory just like the shepherds saw. All of us can expect to face our own version of Herod and his fear and hatred. Christ himself said: *"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."* See, all of us now know what the Magi only knew in part, that we serve a King, a Lord, and a sacrifice.

And finally since all of us have been given far more of a vision that so satisfied Simeon that he declared, *"Let your servant depart,"* let us say, we're not going anywhere yet because we're this world's only hope. *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. Merry Christmas. Let's pray.*

Father, I just praise you and thank you for the incredible gifts that you've given to us: Number one, the gift of your son; number two, the gift of your word. Lord, just thank you for how precious the thing that is. I think of Simeon who saw just a tiny slice and said, it doesn't get any better than this, Lord, take me home. And yet in our hands God has given us the whole picture from beginning to end, and even the middle. And I just continue to pray, Lord, that we would have the sense of urgency to share with the rest of the world what we see. We have the answer to "Do you see what I see," the world does not. I pray you would give us opportunity and the courage to exercise that opportunity, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.