

2020 Vision  
By Rev. Michael R. Blackwood  
United Church of Broomfield  
December 24, 2020 7:00 PM

Luke 1:26-38

Luke 1: 39-55

Matthew 1:18-25

Luke 2:1-7

Luke 2:8-14

Luke 2:15-20

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When we speak of having 20/20 Vision, we are usually coming from a place of completion or “after the fact.” Having finished a task or gotten past an event, we “now” have all of the facts and information ... *and upon reflection* ... as we ponder, we determine that having gone through this OR now having ALL of the facts, we can honestly evaluate that time period and that experience and say how we might have done things differently. It’s the source of the cliché, “Had I known then, what I know now.”

While the calendar is telling us that we’re within one week of the end of 2020, we all know that we’re not really at the end. As we venture into 2021 with trepidation, we have hope that things will be better, but we know that the vestiges of 2020, will still linger.

On this Christmas Eve, is it too soon to play Monday-morning quarterback? Is it too presumptuous of us to look back on what has transpired in the last 9 months and think that we MIGHT have some clarity and understanding? While I think that we do have a better understanding of what has happened in 2020, in order to fully appreciate the **significance** of what we’ve experienced, we need more time, and we need more perspective. Time will tell us just how extreme and severe this period of time has been. It’s similar to Jesus’ birth.

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Jesus’ birth was an event that changed the world forever. Many living at that time had knowledge of the coming Messiah. Many would hear about this Christ Child and be presented with choices. The responses to the news of this Messiah’s birth were varied.

Mary, Joseph, the shepherd and the Magi– they knew just how great that little baby would be for the world --- for all eternity! They responded with joy.

Despite the prophecies of the Messiah’s birth centuries earlier by Isaiah and Micah, many remained in confusion and misunderstanding, others disregarded the prophecies, as well as the news of his factual birth. Some knew of the predictions and instead of seeing the potential for peace and love, only anger and fear manifested. Herod knew that this baby was life- and world-altering, but he didn’t care beyond his own selfishness. He could only see how the baby’s birth would be detrimental to his rule and power – beyond that, Herod cared little.

As time passed, the fact of the Messiah's birth spread. The Christ child grew up and eventually began to minister, to share the gospel...fulfilling more and more prophecies. The people heard and saw this Jesus, - this Emmanuel - demonstrate love, kindness, grace and mercy that was risky, controversial, radical, all-encompassing and all-inclusive.

And what did the people do? How did they respond *after the fact*? Decades, centuries and millennia have passed. How is our hindsight now? Are we succeeding at being Monday-morning quarterbacks? Can we honestly claim that we have 20/20 vision?

The passage of time helps when we're in the midst of difficult and confusing events. AFTER we're through, we often do have better perspective. But it's not a guarantee... *and it's not always necessary*.

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In our scripture readings this evening, words and stories we've heard many, many times before, there are key reminders present that ensure that we have clarity, understanding and 20/20 vision. Are we listening? Are we hearing the word of God this Christmas Eve, **this** supposed END of 2020 – a year most of us want to forget?

Don't forget. Reflect and ponder this year through the eyes of Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds and the magi.

Mary – even though she was an unwed, pregnant child was reminded.... Don't be afraid

Joseph – contemplating a marriage that would guarantee a difficult life was reminded ... Don't be afraid

The Shepherds – startled by a strange, alien vision were told ... Don't be afraid

Jesus' birth was a promise of joy, love, peace and salvation. There wasn't a promise that hardships would go away. Nor that oppression would cease. No guarantee that all the evil rulers would come tumbling down to be replaced with benevolent and kind leaders. There was no assurance that hunger, homelessness, disease or illness would end.

There was promise of the good news of Emmanuel; GOD WITH US.

With our 2020 vision what do we see?

We hear these exhortations every Christmas – frankly, we hear them more than just on Christmas, and at the end of this unusual and brutal year of our Lord 2020, we hear the messages again.

Do not be afraid. God is with us.

Some hear this message and respond with joy; some with confusion and misunderstanding; and yes, some with anger. Those afraid and distrustful will say, "We're still in the middle of a pandemic, of financial hardships, unemployment and uncertainty. We don't have all the facts, yet. We can't adequately LOOK BACK on 2020 and say, 'had I known then, what I know now.'"

YES, YOU CAN.

In all of the fears of the pandemic

In all of the sadness of isolation and quarantines

In all of the terror of job losses, past due bills and empty stomachs

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In all of the frustrations and disgust of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer

We have clarity, we have hindsight, and we have been blessed with 2020 Vision. Knowing what we know and NOT knowing what is ahead of us, we have all of the facts and information that we need;

*Fear not: for, behold, [the angel of the Lord brings] you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ... Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward [all].*

Do not be afraid. God is with us.

God looks with favor on the lowliness of God's servants

Do not be afraid. God is with us.

There will be peace on earth...

Do not be afraid. God is with us.

AMEN