

Merry Christmas

Advent Blessings 2021

Prophets

By: Rev. James Markey

The Arrow and the Song
By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

***I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.***

***I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong,
That it can follow the flight of song?***

It can't be easy being a prophet. Consider, say, Jonah, a prophet after my own heart (although I wish I were more cool like John the Baptist, even if things didn't turn out so well for him either). Jonah receives some unpleasant news directing him to prophesy to some unpleasant people (to him). He doesn't want the gig of going behind what he perceived to be enemy lines, to tell people he doesn't like things they don't want to hear, especially if it means saving them from their doom (a doom he'd be perfectly fine with). He's pretty clear in his intention of not carrying out his directive, too. Poor Jonah ends up spending a long weekend in the belly of a fish, after being thrown overboard by some sailors, who, not for nothing, never would have even heard about Yahweh had it not been for trusty ole Jonah!

Everything about Jonah's story, from his reluctance, to his being put in what I can only imagine is a most disturbing life circumstance (regardless of whether you consider the story is literal or metaphorical) is entirely relatable to me in the most uncomfortable way, right down to the most unenthusiastic display of prophesying, limping through Nineveh and mumbling exactly-what-he-was-told-to-say-but-not-a-word-more. Oh, and can you imagine how it must have hit when those ridiculous, awful Ninevites actually REPENTED AND WERE SPARED???

Anyway, it couldn't have been easy being a prophet. Even when you're taken seriously, which often they were not, with many suffering harsh fates for their troubles, it's still a thankless job. Even with the advantage of hindsight, we often struggle to understand the narrative threaded through the Old Testament that leads to a miraculous birth of a savior, born in most unbelievable circumstances, when God could have at any time taken the easy road of making Jesus a prince, raised to rule. I can imagine that trying to tell people of a messiah who would come, you know, much later at some point, must have been a tough gig.

Telling the truth isn't always easy. Sometimes it hurts. Often, it's uncomfortable. Frequently it feels easier, or kinder, to soften and/or editorialize to our audience. How often do we flat out just say "no thanks" and get on a boat and sail away from the truth, metaphorically or otherwise? How often have we chosen the path that tries to skirt the truth, or ignore it altogether?

After all, we live in a world that tells us it's okay to conceptualize "truth" as a concept that can be different for different people. While I fully support a world where we have the freedom to speak truth without persecution, I do not believe in alternatives to the truth. Facts are facts, and the truth cannot be negotiated, or adjusted. It simply is. How we feel is negotiable, and feelings aren't always, and too often fly in the face of truth. When we stand in the way of the truth, however noble or compassionate our intentions might feel, it can often result in negative consequences. Right, Jonah?

The Arrow and the Song
(Cont'd)

***Long, long afterward, in an oak
I found the arrow, still unbroke;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend.***

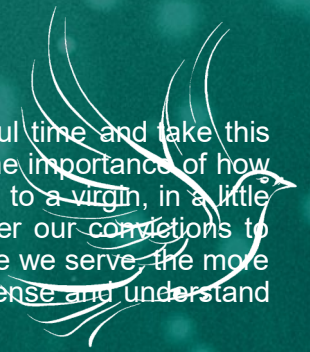
Thank God for His unwillingness to take no for an answer. We serve a savior who is committed to us in spite of humanity's efforts to fight, circumvent, and sometimes blatantly ignore the Truth. Thank God for the numerous examples shown through prophets, from the Jonahs to the Johns, who were willing to stand up (even begrudgingly). You got there in the end Jonah, great job buddy! and serve as an enduring reminder for all of us of the vital importance of truth.

And you know what? The truth is: God Loves You. There's not a single thing you can do to change that. Much as that love has traveled seeking you from the dawn of creation, the words you speak as children of the One True God cast a long arc. "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

Merry Christmas!

Shepherds

By: Rev. Ray Shepherd



As we begin this 2021 Season of Advent we can worship God by seeking meaningful time and take this opportunity to look into the Word of God and learn new insight and understanding of the importance of how God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, came to this earth, in the form of a baby, born to a virgin, in a little town named Bethlehem. I believe the more that we can learn about God, the stronger our convictions to serve His cause will be acted out in each of our daily lives. The more we learn, the more we serve, the more we love, the more we give. God's message is simple enough that a young child can sense and understand their own need of a personal Savior, Jesus Christ.

While the Shepherds role in the Christmas story told in Luke Chapter 2 portrays just one of many examples of how we consistently see God's plan playing out in understandable detail, we can also see how the shepherds fit so well as to their unique and critical role as messengers to confirm and announcing the birth of Jesus Christ to Joseph and Mary, the folks in Bethlehem and ultimately to the world.

The Lord is my Shepherd. While most people are familiar with that line from Psalm 23, there are actually over 40 verses in the bible that make reference to either God or Jesus as being a shepherd or being over his sheep. So it is perfectly fitting that it would be the Shepherds with their flocks by night that would announce the Birth of Jesus Christ who is the True Shepherd that had just arrived on earth.

Shepherds must ultimately possess unique characteristics that particularly suit them for the job they are required to do. Watching over a flock of sheep requires a great deal of attention and care. Sheep must have a shepherd to lead them to green pasture and cool refreshing water, tending to the welfare, veterinary and health needs as well as protect them from harm or attack from other predatory animals as well as accidents, theft and loss of life. The rule of a Shepherd was that they were to protect the animals at all costs even if it meant risking their own lives. If you could not save the animal, you were at least required to bring the hide or carcass back to the rightful owner of the herd as proof of what has happened to the animal. You had to provide an account as to what happened to each animal. Think of the older brothers and Joseph in the story of the coat of many colors in Genesis 37:3. The older brothers where trained as shepherds while Joseph was not. His coat was made and worn as a sign of honor and recognition not to be worn to work in the fields as a shepherd.

Jacob loved Joseph very much and when his brothers returned from plotting against Joseph and selling their bother into slavery, for 20 pieces of silver, they brought with them Josephs blood splattered coat of many colors to present to their father as a sign and proof of what had supposedly happened to their younger brother. A good Shepherd is accountable for what happens to the flock. The shepherds that saw and experienced the angel of the Lord and heard the multitude of heavenly hosts praising God saying "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, good will towards men" (Luke 2:14) were held accountable. God knew who he could trust to reveal the miracle that occurred that wonderful night in Bethlehem. The shepherds instinctively knew to go and see the things that were told to them and to share with Joseph and Mary the news of what had been told to them by the angles.

The Lord is my shepherd, the very one who holds the power of the world in His hands. God used these shepherds to show His loves and protection for each of us given through his Son, Jesus Christ. God portrays the role of the shepherds that night to that of Jesus. Jesus is the one true shepherd who gives his life for his flock and as these shepherds; Jesus too will give an account for each of us on the final Day of Judgment. We like the sheep, play our part in how we choose to treat our shepherd. Do you know his voice? Do we listen when he calls? Do we depend on our shepherd to guide us to green pastures and cool water? Or are we, like sheep, prone to wander off and get lost on a rocky ledge because of our own determination that we can do it on our own?

Use this season of Advent to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas and discover new insight and understandings of how God consistently teaches us more each year about Himself when we spend time with God in His word. I pray that each of you is able to give and receive many blessings through and from God during this special time of year

May God Bless each of you in a special and unique way this holiday season!

MARY

Dr. Court Greene

When I read Mary's story, I never finish the story as the same person that I was when I started. More specifically I have a different understanding of Jesus after each time I read it, because something different stood out which had not hit me in previous readings. Sometimes it is the encounter with the wisemen, and others, the shepherds. Most of the time I am blown away by what is asked of her, and the list continues because her brief appearances in the gospels are so incredibly rich with wisdom and powerful ideas that truly changed the world.

This time, when reading Luke's nativity story, one verse stood out to me. It is so life changing, but so easily overlooked. Luke 1:28 says, "'Greetings, favored one!'" How can I have been so blown away by a simple greeting? Well, it is not quite so simple.

Most of us, and by us I mean humanity, do not expect any encounter with God at all. Most of us, even those of us who believe, live our lives hoping that through faith, God can hear us, but would not seriously entertain the notion that God would actually appear to us in reply. We are so entrenched in the idea that God is *not* going to return our calls, that when God does communicate with us, we call it a miracle. We probably do not tell many about it because we know they will not believe us, and we start asking ourselves if that was really God, or if it were our subconscious making us believe that our thoughts are God's voice.

But Mary is not one of us. She is a Biblical character, and they routinely hear the voice of God, or in this case, God's messengers. So, what made it stand out to me? The message. Even she who was not out of touch with God, as so many of us are, would certainly have been surprised. Imagine the shock of being identified by a perfect being, as "favored." Imagine the fear of the encounter, the emotional whirlwind, and the utter surprise, that a message from God calls you acceptable, approved even, "favored."

It struck me that all of the joy I was feeling for Mary was odd. After all, I do not like to think of God as having favorites. Can God be impartial if God has a "favored one?" Not only did that question hit me hard, but it was immediately followed by another thought. "Don't I want to find favor with God as well?"

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As I wrestled with those conflicting feelings, I once again put myself in the position of Mary. She found favor with God, and did not even seem to be trying. She found favor with God, and was surprised by it! She found favor with God, but she had to be told of her incredible achievement, not because she was unintelligent, but because there is no check-list of dos and don'ts that she could point to that would show her to have officially obtained "favored" status. That was the realization that made all of this so powerful.

We spend a lot of our time, especially in advent, living our lives according to the checklists we contrive. We do our best to earn checkmarks in the "good" categories, and avoid the "bad." We apply our lists of acceptable behaviors, speech, attitudes and thoughts to others, and judge their existence by our lists. Are they "favored?" Are they as "favored" as I am? If so, what's wrong with me? If not, where did they go wrong?

What Mary's favorability and the shock by which its announcement came to her shows us is that favorability in God's judgment is not something we seek, accomplish, and proclaim complete. Instead, it is merely our being. Mary was nothing more than what God created her to be, but she was also nothing less. She was not perfect, because she was as human as any of us, so what made her so favorable?

As far as we can tell from scripture, history, and faith history (tradition), she was willing to serve. She lived as well as she could, but she was not supernatural. She tried, I imagine, but she was not called perfect, just favored. She became the vessel of God's salvation, because the life she lived up to that point showed that she would be obedient. The beauty of this story, among other things, is that any of us can be "favored." All of us can be vessels to be used by God. All of us can live up to what God created us to be. None of us can choose to be perfect no matter how many lists of dos and don'ts we may compile, but all of us can choose to be obedient. All of us can be instruments to be used by God. Anyone can find favor.

May this Advent season bring you peace, knowing that you are not expected to be perfect, but also knowing that as you live into the vessel of God's salvation that you were created to be, you might find favor as well.

MAGI

Bethany Markey

The season of Advent brings its own set of expectations for all of us. We expect to sing our favorite Christmas carols, deck the halls with decorations, and exchange gifts while spending precious time with our loved ones. Most importantly, we expect to celebrate the miraculous birth of our Savior, our source of hope and joy in a lost and broken world. For many of us, these "realized expectations" each year have given us some of our most cherished memories, and helped to further strengthen our faith. And yet for many of us, the past two years have often felt like a sequence of unmet expectations rather than the outcome(s) for which we planned.

The Magi had their own set of expectations on their journey to encounter Jesus firsthand. The Magi were a bit of a mysterious group. Not a lot is mentioned about them in scripture. However, we can reasonably assume they were keen observers of the night sky, familiar with the concepts of astrology, and well acquainted with the paths of planets, stars, and other phenomena. Matthew 2:1-2 speaks of these travelers who on their journey traveled to Jerusalem and asked Herod: "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." This "star of wonder, star of light" we read of in scripture was by no means the first star they had followed. The Magi were well aware that this star provided far more significance and direction than any other star they had encountered. We can see from the gifts they had prepared that they were well aware of whom they were seeking. Gold was a gift for the king, frankincense was a gift for the one they were worshipping, and myrrh was a gift for the savior who would one day give His life for all. They not only hoped to find Jesus, they *EXPECTED* to find Him.

When we look back at the Old Testament, we can see that the birth of the Messiah was not a secret. Prophet after prophet foretold the coming of a savior, and yet even through their faith and expectation, the Magi, and many others, encountered some surprises on the way. They stopped in Jerusalem, the capital city, expecting to find the king in a prestigious and powerful place. Instead, He was found in the small town of Bethlehem, not in a luxurious palace, but inside a modest home. Many in that time were expecting to find Jesus in a position of royalty and political influence. Instead, He was found in a lowly feeding trough, not a political leader, but a child. One may have expected the Pharisees and religious leaders, a group so well-educated on the prophecies of Scripture, to be first in line to seek the long-awaited Messiah. Instead, he was sought by those of low income and status who made their living caring for sheep, as well as weary travelers who purposefully braved the long journey to meet the Christ child. After the Magi had arrived to meet Jesus, we are told in Matthew 2:10-11 "When they saw the star they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped Him". The birth of Jesus fulfilled prophecy that had been known for generations, and yet did so in a way that brought a sense of awe and wonder to those who were seeking Him.

This Christmas, perhaps many or most of our expectations will be fulfilled as we planned. There might also be some disappointing setbacks. However, if we follow the path He has set for us and pay close attention to His calling, perhaps we will see Jesus reveal Himself in a way that brings the same sense of wonder and joy the Magi experienced. May your hearts be filled with hope, peace, joy, and love this season.

Merry Christmas!



Joy to the World

PRAYING | CARING | SHARING

Upcoming Events & Activities Calendar

November:

Nov 16-19		Share The Warmth Coat Give away 10:00 am to 6:00 pm
Nov 18	12:00	Thanksgiving Food Box Distribution
Nov 21	6:00	Canton Community Thanksgiving Service (At Canton 1st)
Nov 25-26		Thanksgiving Holiday - Office Closed
Nov 27	10:00	Decorations and Preparation Day
Nov 28	11:00	Hanging of Green
	2:00	Baby Boy Shower for Kristi Greene

December:

Dec 2	6:00	Young Women's Ministry with special activities planned
Dec 5	1:00	Community Children's Christmas Ministry
Dec 6	3:00	Last day to turn in Christmas Cards
Dec 7	3:00	Deacon Poinsettia Ministry begins
Dec 8	5:30	Christmas Feast (Catered & Reservations Necessary)
Dec 12	12:00	Kidz Happy Birthday Jesus Party
Dec 16	6:00	Young Women's Ministry with special activities planned
Dec 19	11:00	Sanctuary Choir presents For He Alone Is Worthy Christmas Cantata
	12:00	Christmas Celebration Lunch (Reservations Needed)
Dec 24	8:00	Christmas Eve Candlelight Family Communion

AND THE ANGEL SAID UNTO THEM,

FEAR NOT;

FOR, BEHOLD, I BRING YOU

good tidings of great joy.

WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE.

-LUKE 2:10

*Unto Us
a Child is Born*



CHANGE of ADDRESS

Canton First Baptist Ch.

208 Academy St

Canton, NC 28716



12:00 Noon Distribution
Thursday, November 18th
Canton First Baptist Church
208 Academy Street, Canton, NC
Thanksgiving Food Boxes

**FREE GROCERY
GIVEAWAY
Food Distribution**

Church Food-Box Volunteers arrive @ 10:00 am

**Hanging
of the Christmas
Green**



*November 28, 2021
11 am Morning Worship*



The Sanctuary
Choir will Present

FOR HE ALONE IS WORTHY

Sunday, December 19th
during the
Morning Worship Service

**FIRST
KIDZ**

**KIDZ GRADES K4 TO 5TH
STAY AFTER WORSHIP FOR
LUNCH & FUN
WITH LISA
& FRIENDS!**

Weekly: Sunday at 9:45 am & 11 am

December 12: Happy Birthday Jesus Party

December 24: 8pm Christmas Eve Service

January 23: Bowling \$10

February 13: Movie & Games \$10

Keeping Haywood Warm




Blankets, Socks, Coats, Gloves/Mittens
All sizes for ages 0 to 100 for Boys, Girls, & Adults

**Shopping begins Tuesday,
November 16th from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm.**
Located in the Fellowship Hall.





New or Like New & Laundered!

Community Thanksgiving Service

6:00 pm Sunday, November 21
at
Canton First Baptist Church

Everyone is invited

Join us for a Baby BOY Shower as we cheer for

Kristi & Court

Sunday, November 28th @ 2:00 pm

Fellowship Hall at Canton First Baptist

Drop-In between 2pm-4pm

Registry at:
Amazon, Walmart & Babylist.com



Christmas Eve



Service

Friday, December 24th @ 8:00 pm

Canton First Baptist Church

Church Office: [cfbc202@gmail.com](mailto:cfb202@gmail.com)
828.648.2367

Monday—Thursday, 9:00 am to 2:00 pm,
other times by appointment



Name That Christmas Song

A lyric from the song is given. In what song would you find the lyric?

1. "Round yon virgin mother and child"
 - a. Jingle Bells
 - b. Silent Night
 - c. I'll be Home for Christmas
 - d. We Three Kings
2. "And Heaven and nature sing"
 - a. Away in a Manger
 - b. Joy to the World
 - c. While Shepherds Watched
 - d. White Christmas
3. "'Tis the season to be jolly"
 - a. Jingle Bells
 - b. While Shepherds Watched
 - c. Deck the Halls
 - d. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen
4. "God and sinners reconciled"
 - a. O Come O Come Emmanuel
 - b. O come All Ye Faithful
 - c. Hark the Herald Angels
 - d. The First Noel
5. "Disperse the gloomy clouds of night"
 - a. O Come All Ye Faithful
 - b. O Come O Come Emmanuel
 - c. Hark the Herald Angels
 - d. The First Noel
6. "Joyful and triumphant"
 - a. O Come All Ye Faithful
 - b. Joy to the World
 - c. Deck the Halls
 - d. Ave Maria
7. "Looked down where he lay"
 - a. The First Noel
 - b. Little Town of Bethlehem
 - c. Joy to the World
 - d. Away in a Manger
8. "O tidings of comfort and joy"
 - a. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen
 - b. The First Noel
 - c. Ding Dong Merrily on High
 - d. Away in a Manger
9. "On a cold winter's night that was so deep"
 - a. Away in a Manger
 - b. The First Noel
 - c. Ave Maria
 - d. Deck the Halls
10. "Hang a shining star upon the highest bough"
 - a. O Come O Come Emmanuel
 - b. Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas
 - c. Hark the Herald Angels
 - d. Frosty the Snowman
11. "City sidewalk, busy sidewalks, dressed in holiday style"
 - a. Joy to the World
 - b. Deck the Halls
 - c. Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer
 - d. Silver Bells
12. "Please have snow and mistletoe and presents under the tree"
 - a. Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas
 - b. Silent Night
 - c. I'll Be Home For Christmas
 - d. Jingle Bells
13. "Somebody snitched on me"
 - a. Bill's Christmas Treat
 - b. The First Noel
 - c. Nuttin' for Christmas
 - d. Deck the Halls
14. "Bearing gifts we traverse afar"
 - a. Jingle Bells
 - b. Silent Night
 - c. I'll Be Home for Christmas
 - d. We Three Kings
15. "Come on, it's lovely weather"
 - a. Deck the Halls
 - b. While Shepherds Watched
 - c. Jingle Bells
 - d. Sleigh Ride

Thank you for your amazing power and work in our lives, thank you for your goodness and for your blessings over us. Thank you that you are Able to bring hope through even the toughest of times, strengthening us for your purposes. Thank you for your great love and care.

Thank you for your mercy and grace. Thank you that you are always with us and will never leave us. Thank you for your incredible sacrifice so that we might have freedom and life. Forgive us for when we don't thank you enough, for who you are, for all that you do, for all that you've given. Help us to set our eyes and our hearts on you afresh. Renew our spirits, fill us with your peace and joy. We love you and we need you, this day and every day. We give you praise and thanks, for You alone are worthy!
In Jesus' Name, Amen."

DEBBIE MCDANIEL

Canton First Baptist Church

828.648.2367 www.canton-fbc.org

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The Birth of Jesus according to Luke Chapter 2:

1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register.

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

