

The Sounds of Christmas

Luke 2:13-14

PW Emerson – 12/09/2018 – Ten:27 Ministries

When I think about sounds at Christmas, what comes to mind is

- Christmas Carols
- The sounds of presents being unwrapped
- Lots of laughter
- Excitement – with all sorts of presents

But as I thought about it, I started wondering about the sounds of Christmas during the original event.

What were the sounds of Christmas?

There were 3 distinct sounds from Christmas

1) THE SOUND OF AWE

MANY of the people associated with the Christmas event were awestruck and/or afraid at what they were being told.

It makes sense ... if an angel appeared before me I'm sure I'd be in awe too!

Luke 1:11-14

¹¹Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹²When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. ¹³But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. ¹⁴He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth

Zechariah was

- Startled
- Gripped with fear

He is alone, in the holiest of holies, in the temple, when an angel appears.

Angels didn't appear to many people.

The angel brings him a joyful message!

Zechariah was thrilled. I would say, he was in awe!

He's not alone ...

Three years ago, at a church in North Carolina, there was an envelope in the offering plate. It contained

- 18 cents
- A note saying, "Please don't be mad I don't have much. I'm homeless. God bless."

Talk about being in awe ... the minister was in awe!

During the Christmas event,

- Zechariah is thrilled and in awe
- Elizabeth is thrilled and in awe
- Joseph is thrilled and in awe
- Mary is thrilled and in awe
- The Shepherds are in awe!
- The 3 kings or wisemen or magi are in awe – that's why they traveled so far, for the birth of the king of kings!

There is awe in every corner of the Christmas event!

Today ...

- People give more during the Christmas season than any other time of the year
- Christmas has become too commercialized

BUT

- People are more kind to one another during the Christmas season
- People reach out to help more during the Christmas season

I am in awe by the reaction of people today

And having seen how God changes peoples' lives,

I am in awe every time someone turns to God

And it was all possible starting with the birth of Jesus.

I love driving home after the Christmas Eve service

- All the parking lots are empty
- Everything is calm
- Everyone is either at home or an church
- It's the only time of the year when our world is that calm.

And it's all because of Christmas.

The sound of awe is powerful.

The second sound around the Christmas event

II THE SOUND OF CELEBRATION

Luke 2:13-14

¹³Suddenly 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."

I used to live in Germany.

I mention that because in Germany, people really know how to throw a party.

And people use any little excuse to throw a party.

For my departure, my host mother tricked me into having a going away party...

But however good any party you've ever been to is, it's nothing compared to the celebration that took place around the birth of Jesus.

ANGELS ...we don't know how many but it says a company of heavenly hosts were praising God!

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

People today have GREAT celebrations geared around Christmas

- Churches have special choir concerts
- Children in church have special Christmas pageant
- We sing special song JUST during this time of year – you don't hear anyone singing “Joy to the World, the Lord has come” in July!
- Churches have a special service on Christmas eve
- In fact, Catholics have heavily attended service on Christmas day!
- Christian artists of all shapes and sizes have special Christmas concerts
- People decorate in celebration of Christmas!
- People have Christmas parties!
- People wear special clothes in recognition of Christmas!

Christmas 2000 years ago was a great time of celebration.

I am thankful to say that holds true today!

Luke 1:41-42

⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!"

The baby leaped in her womb.

Christmas was a time of celebration and jumping for joy!

I pray that it is still a time of celebration.

We should hear that sound at Christmas

But the third sound at Christmas is

III THE SOUND OF SORROW

Matthew 2:13-18

¹³When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

¹⁴So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son" (Hosea 11:1)."

¹⁶When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸"A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more."

Jeremiah 31:15

Herod is so fearful of what Jesus represents that he orders all boys 2 years old and younger to be killed ... in hopes of killing Jesus.

You might think that mass murder is barbaric ... but this king killed his own sons because he was afraid they would kill him for his throne.

Throughout his life, people felt threatened by Jesus and tried to get rid of him.

That was how he died ...

- the leaders of the Jewish council felt threatened ...
- the Roman governor was worried about an uprising ...

Many others tried to kill him earlier in his life.

The Christmas event ended with these boys 2 years and younger being killed.

Christmas today is depressing for many people. It reminds many that

- they don't have family to lean on
- someone close to them has died and isn't there to celebrate Christmas with

Historically, this time of year has the highest suicide rate.

So unfortunately, the sound of sorrow at Christmas continues

But it doesn't have to ...

Today, Christmas is most visibly celebrated by people with money

- afford lots of presents
- afford travel
- afford Christmas decorations ...

But Christmas isn't about money

Jesus wasn't born into a palace ... he was born in a stable or a cave

Jesus wasn't born into a rich family, he was born into a poor family

(Leviticus 12:6-8 & Luke 2:24)

It shows that Jesus' birth demonstrated that he is for everyone!

If you want to remove the sound of sorrow from Christmas,

- tell people you don't want any presents
- Instead, for people close to you, hand write a letter explaining to that person that they are a gift from God in your life.
- Reach out to be with someone who may not have a place to go or people to be with on Christmas

The sounds of Christmas don't need to include sorrow – today it's up to us whether it does or not.

CONCLUSION

A popular play and movie this time of year, one I always enjoy watching is A Christmas Carol. There is one scene that has always fascinated me. The Ghost of Christmas Past has just paid a very discomfoting visit to Ebenezer Scrooge. Clearly the old miser is shaken by the entire ordeal. But when he awakens from his sleep does he take the message to heart. No, he simply dismisses it by saying: Bah, humbug, it wasn't real.

"Just a bit of last nights undigested beef," he says to himself, "There is more gravy about you than the grave."

By the end of the story, Ebenezer had been changed, by Christmas.

I hope we are all so fortunate.

Is Christmas to be taken to heart or simple indigestion. You tell me.

Brett Blair, Sermon Illustrations, 1999.