



water from rock

## Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – December 24, 2020

The Lord be with you.

Wow, it's finally Christmas Eve! I just love to this day. From the time I was a little boy, the trajectory of my whole year is headed towards this day, I look forward to this day. And especially after a painful, difficult 2020, today we rejoice and celebrate, and there were so many verses of scripture I wish I had the time to share with you. So many wonderful Christmas Eve stories, and I would hardly know where to begin, but I do want to tell you a Christmas Eve story that the great radio personality, Paul Harvey told, and a lot of Harvey's life was shaped by the fact that it was on a Christmas Eve when he was only three years old, that his father, who was a policeman, was murdered by a gunman's bullet. And one of the great, great moments in my life was in 2009 when I was on the call as a chaplain at the hospital in the Phoenix area, that I was called to come and to pray with Paul Harvey just before he died. Paul Harvey tells of a time that there was an emptiness in his life and there was an incompleteness that he just couldn't explain as outwardly, everything was going great for Paul Harvey, and then he was vacationing in Cave Creek, Arizona. He and his wife Angel went to a little church, he said, of a dozen or so worshipers seated on wooden folding chairs, and Paul Harvey said that he re-dedicated his life to Jesus Christ. And from that moment of giving his life to Jesus Christ, he said that he had a peace that passes all understanding and heaven too.

Well, that was Paul Harvey. Now, Paul Harvey's Christmas Eve story that he titled simply The Birds.

"The man to whom I'm going to introduce so was not a scrooge, he was a kind, decent, mostly good man, generous to his family, upright in his dealings with other people, but he just didn't believe all that incarnation stuff, which churches proclaim at Christmas time. It just didn't make sense. And he was too honest, pretend otherwise, he couldn't swallow the Jesus story about God coming to earth as a man. I'm truly sorry to distress you, he told his wife, but I'm not going with you to church this Christmas Eve. He said, I feel like I appreciate they did much rather just stay at home, but that he would wait up for them, and so he stayed, and they went to the Midnight Christmas Eve service. Shortly after the family drove away in the car snow began to fall, he went to the window to watch the flurries getting heavier and heavier, and then went back to his fire side chair and began to read his newspaper. Minutes later he was startled by a thudding sound then another, and then another sort of a thump or a thud. At first, he thought someone must be throwing snowballs against his living room window, but when he went to the front door to investigate, he, he found a flock of birds huddle miserably in the snow, they've been caught in a storm and in a desperate search for shelter, had tried to fly through his large landscape window.

Well, he couldn't let the poor creatures lie there and freeze. And so, he remembered the barn where his children stabled their pony. Well, that will provide a warm shelter if he could direct the birds to



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it. Quickly he put on a coat and galoshes, tramped through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the doors wide and turned on a light, but the birds did not come in. A figured food would entice them in. So, we hurried back to the house, fetched breadcrumbs, sprinkled them on the snow, making a trail to the yellow lighted, wide open doorway of the stable, but to his dismay the birds ignore the breadcrumbs and continue to flap around helplessly in the snow. He tried catching them. He tried showing them into the barn by walking around them, waving his arms, and instead they scattered in every direction, except into the warm lighted born.

And then he realized that they were afraid of him. To them, he reasoned, I'm a strange and terrifying creature, if only I could think of some way to let them know that they can trust me, that I'm not trying to hurt them, but to help them, but how? Because any move he made tended to frighten them, confused them, they just would not follow. They would not be led or showed because they feared him. Hmm, if only I could be a bird, he thought to himself, and I could mingle with them and speak their language. Then I could tell them not to be afraid. Then I could show them the way to the safe warm... to the safe, warm barn. But I would have to be one of them. So, they could see and hear and understand. At that moment, the church bells began to ring, the sound reaches ears above the sounds of the wind, and he stood there listening to the bells... O Come, Let Us Adore Him. And listening to the bells, peeling the glad tidings of Christmas, and he sank to his knees in the snow, and today we sink to our knees on this Christmas Eve, and we adore Jesus Christ the Lord."

I'll be with you again on the other side of Christmas, the day after as it is a very important day.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening. Merry Christmas!



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