



## **Selah: Stop, Look, Listen- December 6, 2022**

The Lord be with you.

Proverbs chapter 4 verse 18 says that the path of the righteous is like the light of the dawn which shines brighter and brighter until full day. And for the next few moments I want to talk with you about a man whose life shines brighter and brighter over the centuries and that is Saint Nicholas. I mean the real Saint Nicholas as today December 6 around the world is celebrated as Saint Nicholas Day. And I like to remember Saint Nicholas because well we're living in a culture that needs heroes. I mean people that we can look up to as we've got a lot of celebrities but we need heroes whose lives shine brightly.

Now you look at the name Santa Claus that we talk a lot about these days. Well Santa Claus it actually comes from the name Saint Nicholas. Santa meaning saint and Claus well that's Nikolaus that got shortened over the years to Claus. So that the story of Santa Claus is really the memory of Saint Nikolaus that I want to hold up today as he is the righteous who is like the light of the dawn that shines brighter and brighter.

Saint Nicholas lived in the fourth century in Asia Minor that is modern Turkey. He lived at a time that Christianity was beginning to spread like wildfire across Europe. Saint Nicholas was born into a wealthy family but after his parents died from a plague he shared his wealth with the poor of his community. I mean Saint Nicholas was a giver. He was a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ and in time he was eventually made the Bishop of the city of Myra that is on the southern coast of Turkey. And there are records of his being at the great Council of Nicaea in the year 325. The council that gave us the Nicene Creed that we recite in our churches 1600 years later.

Now in addition to Saint Nicholas' many church responsibilities he was known far and wide as a man who really cared for the poor. And there are passed down to us many stories about Saint Nicholas secretly leaving gifts at night for the children of the poor. Saint Nicholas was a brave and determined man in the face of persecution of Christians and he was actually imprisoned for a time by the Roman Emperor Diocletian. When he was eventually released from prison Saint Nicholas continued his faithful ministry to the church and his community until his death in the year 343.

One of the better known stories about Saint Nicholas generosity was a story about his anonymous gift to a poor family whose parents could not afford dowries for their three daughters. And the parents were faced with selling their daughters either into slavery or into prostitution. But Saint Nicholas intervened. He went to their house late one night and he threw through the window a bag of gold coins to save the daughters. And with that actually began the long Christian tradition of



water from rock

giving secretly to the poor.

So yes there there really is a Santa Claus and his name is Saint Nicholas of Myra whose birthday is celebrated around the world. His life reads like today's scripture. A righteous life whose light shines brighter and brighter until the day of the Lord's return. Here's someone to look up to. A real hero for our times. Saint Nicholas. Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work or watch or weep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ. Give rest to the weary. Bless the dying. Soothe the suffering. Pity the afflicted. Shield the joyous. And all for your love's sake. Amen.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time.