



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – December 19, 2023

The Lord be with you.

How was your vision today? How are you seeing what is going on around you? Eye doctors recommend what they call the 20/20 rule to see better. That is every 20 minutes, we look away from what we're doing to look at something at least 20 ft away for 20 seconds. That is the 20/20 rule for resting and refocusing in our eyes to give us a better vision of what is going on around us. But you know, I find that I need the 20/20/20 rule for my spiritual vision. And that is to frequently look away from today's news to look away from all that is going wrong in the world to look away to our glorious future, to what God is going to do when Jesus comes again.

Because you know advent is not only a time for celebrating Jesus first advent as a little baby, but it's also a time for celebrating Jesus second advent when he comes to put right? Our broken world.

The advent season of 1864 was a dark one for our nation and it was a dark one for the poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow as he was in Cambridge, Massachusetts, caring for the crippling wounds of his son Charles, who had been seriously injured in a civil war battle in Virginia. And while Longfellow was caring for his injured son, he was also grieving the recent death of his beloved wife, Fannie. We'd been burned in an accidental fire dying from her burns the next morning. And because of his own burns and trying to save Fannie Longfellow was unable to attend his beloved wife's funeral. And it was because of those very burns that Longfellow wasn't able to shave. And so he grew his trademark beard and mass of snowy hair. Things seem so dark for a longfellow that advent season that he had put down his pen and able to write and not wanting to write poetry anymore.

But then came Christmas Day the day that many people who are alone in their grief, the day that they dread then came Christmas Day and Longfellow hears all the church bells of Cambridge as they're ringing joyfully. A long fellow, sat at his desk brooding. But then for the first time in a long time, he picked up his pen to pour forth his despair. Perhaps you, you know his words as he wrote.

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day,
their old familiar carol's play
and wild and sweet the words repeat
of peace on earth, goodwill to men
and in despair I bowed my head
there is no peace on earth I said
for hate is strong and mocks the song
of peace on earth goodwill to men.*



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And longfellow agonize, he agonized over his own personal pain and the world's pain of the past year. And then Longfellow. Well, he turned his thoughts to God. He looked away to the second advent of our Lord Jesus. And in looking away he wrote, he continued to write words that I need to hear and perhaps you need to hear them today. He said, then peel the bells more loud and deep. God is not dead nor doth He sleep. The wrong shall fail the right to prevail with peace on earth. Good will to men.

Water from rock's advent devotional The light has shined, it looks to Jesus first advent as a little baby and it looks ahead to Jesus second advent when he comes in glory to rule and reign and to put right this broken world. The prophet Isaiah blends together Jesus first advent and his second advent.

Writing these glorious words, the people who walked in darkness. I've seen a great light. Those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them. Light has shined and you know, it all has to do with the was the birth of a child. It all has to do with Christmas. As the prophet Isaiah continues, he says, for a child has been born for us, a son given to us and authority rests upon his shoulders and he is named wonderful counselor, mighty God everlasting father prince of peace. His authority shall grow continually and there shall be endless peace.

Yes, there is much darkness in our world. Today, we see war in Europe, war in the Middle East. Talk of war in the far east. Just the kinds of wars and rumors of wars that Jesus told us to be prepared for. But Jesus also told us to look away, to look away to God's new world. Coming to Jesus second advent. The wrong shall fail the right prevail with peace on earth, goodwill to men. And it all begins with a child born for us. A so given to us something to look for something to think about this Advent season.

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