



water from rock

## Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – December 23, 2021

The Lord be with you.

It's almost Christmas. I just love Christmas. From the time I was a little boy, I have loved Christmas. The trajectory of my whole year heads towards Christmas, and I noticed around us that a lot of people have put up Christmas lights and decorations early this year as it seems after an especially painful, difficult 2021, that we are more than ready to rejoice and celebrate Christmas.

And there are so many verses of scripture that I wish I had time to share it with you. So many wonderful Christmas stories that I hardly know where to begin today, but I wouldn't want to let to stay past without telling you a Christmas story that the late great radio personality, Paul Harvey liked to tell. And a lot of Paul 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 bullet. And one of the great moments in my life was in the year 2009, when I was on call, it was a chaplain at the Mayo Hospital in Phoenix, that Paul Harvey requested a chaplain to come and pray with him just before he died. And Paul Harvey told of a time that there was darkness and emptiness in his life, and that he couldn't explain it outwardly as everything seemed to be going great for Paul Harvey. But it was then that he was vacationing in Cave Creek, Arizona, and he and his wife angel went to a little church, he said The only about a dozen or so worshippers as they were seated on wooden folding chairs, and Paul Harvey said that he re-dedicated his life to Jesus Christ, and He said that from that moment of giving his life to Jesus Christ, he said that he had a peace that passes all understanding. And he had heaven too. Well, that was Paul Harvey.

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

The man to whom I'm going to introduce you 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 with churches proclaim at Christmas time, it just didn't make sense to him, and he was too honest to pretend otherwise, he said 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. He said he would be a hypocrite. And he much rather just stay at home, but that he'd wait up for them. And so he stayed home and they went to their midnight Christmas Eve service.

Well, shortly after the family drove away in the car, snow began to fall, the man went to the window to watch the flurries getting heavier and heavier, and then he went back to his fireside chair and began to read his newspaper. Minutes later, he was startled by a thudding sound then another,



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and then another sort of thump or 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 found a flock of birds huddle miserably in the snow, they've been caught in a storm and in a desperate search for shelter that 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 into the barn. Quickly, he put on the coat golaces and tramped through the deepening snow to the barn, he open the doors wide and turned on a light, but the birds did not come in. He thought that food would entice in, so he hurried back to the kitchen, fetch bread crumbs. Sprinkled him on the snow, making a trail to the lighted wide open doorway of the stable, but to his dismay, the birds ignored the bread crumbs and continued to flap around helplessly in the snow. He tried catching them. I tried shoving them into the barn by walking around them waving his arms, and instead they scattered in every direction except into the warm lighted barn, and then he realized that they were afraid of him. To them, he reasoned, I'm astrange 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 had made tended to frighten them, confuse them, they just would not follow, they would not be led or showed the way because they feared him. If only I could be a bird, he thought to himself, If only I could be a bird and I could mingle with them and speak their language then that I could tell them not to be afraid, then I could show them the way to the safe... 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 to begin 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. Come let us adore Him. And listening to the bells peeling, the glad tidings of Christmas. The man sank to his knees in the snow, and he worshipped.

And today, you and I, we sink to our knees and we worship... We adore Jesus Christ the Lord. I do look forward to being with you on Christmas Day.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening. See you next time.