

Behold
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And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:10-11

When I hear the word, “behold,” I don’t think of it as something I do on a regular basis. To behold is to look with awe-struck intensity, so much so, that you may even lose yourself in the object of your attention. No, that kind of experience is reserved for extraordinary moments, astonishing sights or terrible tragedies. To behold something is truly a rarity.

If only it were true...

Think of all the people trying to get your attention. In fact, I’m doing that right now. “Behold, an article from a pastor!” [insert trumpet fanfare here] I have something to say, and I would love for you to hear it. But I have some stiff competition. We are constantly bombarded with all the things to behold. If it’s not the craziness of COVID, it’s divisive political intrigue. If it’s not radical social changes, it’s the latest natural disaster. Behold the talking heads who want to tell you what to think! Behold the social media black hole ready to suck you in.

I don’t know whether I’m addicted to the thrill of so much beholding, or if I have forgotten what it is not to be continually stimulated by some sort of earth-shattering message. I tire of it all. Maybe I have “beholding fatigue.” How many things can we be asked to behold with rapt attention until we build up a tolerance to it? Eventually, nothing will be all that interesting unless it shocks us to the core. Maybe that’s why everyone is shouting. It’s the only way to get our attention.

Some things worthy of beholding aren’t shouted at us. I think about the quiet beauty of a sunrise, the smile of a loved one, or the simple joy of being together. There’s more. We’re in a season of beholding. Advent invited us to behold the coming King. We look forward to Jesus’ return, when He will remake this world to its original beauty. Christmas invites us to behold the manger, where God entered the world as a baby to save us. Epiphany invites us to behold Jesus as He emerged on the scene, teaching, healing and calling the people to faith.

Perhaps the most important thing to behold is the One with us all the time – God. Sometimes God shouts to get our attention, but most of the time He’s just there. He’s there, waking up in the morning. He’s there, putting food on our tables. He’s there, guiding our steps through His word. He’s there...but do we behold Him? I’m asking myself as much as I’m asking you. Do I behold Him? Do I behold God with such an awe-struck intensity that I lose myself in Him? In the midst of such moral depravity, do I behold the beauty of His instruction? In the midst of such divisiveness and hatred, do I behold His offer for forgiveness and peace? In the midst of such deep uncertainty, do I behold the comfort and joy of the baby Jesus?

There’s no better time to start than now. ‘Tis the season! Behold your God.