

From A Distance

12-24-06

Have you ever noticed how something looks good from a distance but when you get up close and personal it loses its appeal or, at least changes in its appearance? This happens when we look at scenery or events or even, at people. Our perspective and perceptions change when we begin to see things more closely and clearly.

The world Jesus was born into must have looked pretty much the same from space as ours looks today. Much of the planet was far from being discovered and settled so it must have been a much clearer view but it looked perfect just as it was. However, it was a world of confusion and a world in which many were searching for a moral compass and a guide for life. Into this world came a baby who was destined to grow up into a man who changed the world.

Our present world is just as troubled and confused as was the world he came into. Perhaps, that is why, as we move through the four Sundays of Advent preceding this night, we light candles of hope, forgiveness, joy and love in the church. These candles remind us of what could be if we would choose to follow the teachings of the one who came to lead us into a better understanding of our God and our selves. They point to the characteristics God possesses that we are to reflect to all those with whom we come in contact. Without hope for the present and future it is difficult to move forward in life. It always seems that when everything else around us fails, we continue to journey on in hope. Without the ability to forgive and accept forgiveness, we can be chained to lives of bitterness and emptiness. We become people who live in unhappiness unable to let go of the past. We forget that the only time we surely have is this moment in the present. With no joy we cannot ever feel the sense that all is right with the world as we gaze upon a peaceful sunrise or sunset or see the face of a child as this season surrounds us. And if we have no love, we are empty. The ability to give and receive love is essential to our beings. Without love all hope, forgiveness and joy fly out the windows of our souls. We become sad and lonely humans.

From a distance no one can see that we lack these precious qualities, it is when we get close to one another that we notice what is missing. We are never to judge others, so it is best we take a close look at ourselves to see where it is we need a bit of improvement. For we can only change ourselves and in so doing change the corner of the world we live in. We can make all things better and new again. We can try to embrace the world as did Jesus and make change, small though it may seem, that may lead to greater change in the course of time. It is a slow process, but if we are ever to integrate the way the world looks from a distance and the way it really is close up, we each must play a part.

As many of you know I often think in music. It is a blessing and a curse. And, as many of you know, the title of this meditation comes from a song made popular by Bette Midler. The words to the Christmas version of the song "From a Distance" attempt to give us a view of the way things could be if we all move forward in the pathways of Christ. Those words are:

From a distance the world looks blue and green,
And the snow-capped mountains white.
From a distance the ocean meets the stream

And the eagle takes to flight.

From a distance there is harmony,
And it echoes through the land.
It's the voice of hope, it's the voice of peace.
It's the voice of every man.

From a distance the world sings "Silent Night"
Like a soft embracing song.
From a distance the words sound sweet and clear
And all is bright and calm.

From a distance we are instruments
Marching in a common band
Playing songs of hope, playing songs of peace,
They're the songs of every man.

God is watching us, God is watching us
I know God is watching us from a distance.

From a distance you look like my friend,
Even though we are at war.
From a distance I just cannot comprehend
What all this fighting's for.

From a distance there is harmony,
Do you hear it echo through the land?
It's the song of joy, it's the song of peace
It's the heart of every man
In the season of universal love
This is the song of every man

God is watching us, God is watching us
I know He's watching us
From a distance.
God is watching us
God is watching us,
I know he's watching us
From a distance.

Tonight is the night of Emmanuel, "God with us." He came through Jesus from a distance to help us find hope, forgiveness, joy and love for all humankind in this very time and place. Amen

