

12-5-1952

Notes: Christmas Vesper: Bethlehem Awake, 1952

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57-11

I

DATE 12/5/52 OCCASION Chapel

4 min
647

THEME Bethlehem - Awake

in a
special
way

1. Want to begin this morning, reading one of the strangest prophecies in history of world-
 strange - because, for the first time in all history -
 it relates heaven & eternity to a dirty little
 Jewish village - because all the universe passes of
 the Universe on an inn & a stable in one of
 history's whistle-stops. Hieah: "But thou, Bethlehem
 Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands
 of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth
 unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose
 goings forth have been from of old, from
 everlasting..." "The babe & foster" -

2. Now that is strange! Have often wondered what
 might have happened if we human beings had been
 put in charge of the Incarnation of our Lord
 at Bethlehem - surely: committee & sub-committee -
 probably a great procession - a banquet - at
 Jerusalem, not in that country town - all the things
 we do when we welcome the great -

3. How different was God's way - "But thou Bethlehem -
 little among the thousands of Judah" - chosen for
 the event of that great, topsy-turvy night - in
 which all the intricacies of history become ^{and tangible} audible
 in the whimpers of a Baby - complete space to
 shepherds - all things in quiet silence and the
 night at midnight - in Bethlehem - and in a
 moment the little village & New York, Chicago, etc.
 become parts of the same divine plan, point &
 counterpoint, stripes & antistrophe - why? because
 the Child was the ^{where} goings forth have been from
 of old - from everlasting in this night right

22

DATE 12/5/52 OCCASION Chapel -

THEME Bethlehem

4. Ever noticed how few people in Bethlehem that night really knew what was going on. ^{of one hand} Mary, Joseph, a few shepherds - ^{all} of course the rest of the creation was around too - the animals who gave up part of their home to them who had given them life - and the angels far from home whose great & shining hour came before their smallest audience - oh, there was a great company at Bethlehem all right - but most of it was invisible - the rising & swelling choir of glory - all the sentinels of praise before the Master, the psalmists & the prophets, the evangelists and the saints - all the poor in spirit, all the meek and lowly of heart - all whose visions have been hurt by the hard ground before the Master - all of these were there - and for a moment Bethlehem Ephr. became the world's greatest city - the City of God - the ~~eternal~~ little, dark reflexion of the City fair & high - the New Jerusalem whose King was born ~~at Bethlehem~~ ^{at Bethlehem} this night - at Bethlehem.

5. What has all this to do with us now? Well in a few moments the Chapel Choir will sing Bach's setting of "Wave aware, for night is flying" - in majestic tones you will heart again what the Xian Church has been saying to the world these 2000 years, esp. at the season of Advent. "Wave aware" - become aware of our choice to the Child of Bethlehem - He comes to your heart & mine in one of two ways - either in mercy or in judgment - but He comes - He is the one completely inevitable ^{human} presence in history - He is the

Vigil
57-III

Chorus of
Choir

Wagner's
Prelude

Verse
67-IV

III

DATE

12/5/58

OCCASION

THEME

Bethlehem

Hand of
Bethlehem

world's ring - either in grace ~~at~~ at Bethlehem or
 in power ~~at~~ at Armageddon - war, and - for
 night is flying ^{in this light} - This certainly should be said
 by somebody ^{in 1952} - once more the world
 troubles ^{in days to come} and it may be due to the coming of
 his feet - it will be good for us to listen for
 these - incredibly, eternally good - for in His
 coming is our last hope and our
 eternal joy - the hope of ~~Christmas~~ & of Judgment

The Chapel Choir

our listrains can be