

12/14/25 SALT CO

HARK!"

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."

John 1:14

Table Talk I

Picture in your mind your favorite Christmas tree as a kid

Now Picture your best Christmas gift as a kid

Turn your place mat over, close your eyes and draw a picture of that tree and that gift.

Share your picture with your table

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

1 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say:
Jesus Christ was born today.
Ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!

2 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss:
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door,
and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!

3 Good Christian friends, rejoice
 with heart and soul and voice;
 now ye need not fear the grave:
 Jesus Christ was born to save!
 Calls you one and calls you all
 to gain his everlasting hall.
 Christ was born to save!
 Christ was born to save!

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing!

1 Hark! the herald angels sing,
 "Glory to the newborn King:
 peace on earth, and mercy mild,
 God and sinners reconciled!"
 Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
 join the triumph of the skies;
 with th'angelic hosts proclaim,
 "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain:

Hark! the herald angels sing,
 "Glory to the newborn King"

2 Christ, by highest heaven adored,
 Christ, the everlasting Lord,
 late in time behold him come,
 offspring of the Virgin's womb:
 veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
 hail th'incarnate Deity,
 pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
 Jesus, our Immanuel. [Refrain]

3 Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
 Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
 Light and life to all he brings,
 risen with healing in his wings.
 Mild he lays his glory by,
 born that we no more may die,
 born to raise us from the earth,
 born to give us second birth. [Refrain]

Joy to the World!

Joy to the world; the Lord is come;
Let Earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room,
And heav'n and nature sing.

2. Joy to the Earth, the Savior reigns;
Our mortal songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy.

3. No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.

4. He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love.

SALT TALK

Hark! An old-fashioned word for “listen up!” It is to pay attention and listen carefully.

Here’s my question for us this Christmas SALT CO morning,

When have you caught yourself really listening?

Nurse briefing me after Suzanne’s surgery, Dr. McCannel calling me(!)

Listening with my full (as full as I can manage) presence- not wanting to miss, wanting to take all this in, to “understand”, to “stand under” with intent to do! To make it so.

It's not easy to hear like this.

One question asked at the Roundtable a few weeks ago was what do YA people want Seasoned Adults to understand about being YA today? One of the YAers at my table said, “There's so much noise, distraction, that makes it hard to hear, to focus. Making for confusion, discouragement, in some cases even despair.”

It's true. Media/ advertising working on us every waking moment. AI intensifies the noise. Screens, these “glowing rectangles” vie for our attention- our most important asset, affecting even the way we pay attention. After a while we can even come to believe what matters most are “death and taxes”. Our screens are doing our thinking and imagining for us. Neuroscience now tells us they are literally reshaping our brains.

This affects our hearing. How we listen.

Today the average “attention span of an adult is 8 to 12 seconds, *“a frequently cited figure, suggesting our ability to focus on one thing has shrunk, similar to a goldfish”* (AI generated).

[Think about what then happens when we come to read or listen to a two-thousand-year-old writing where these forces were not yet in play... These whole “books” were written to be read aloud and listened to in one sitting! What are we missing? Failing to hear?]

We seasoned adults care a lot about hearing. We try to stay up on all manner of technologies that aid with hearing. But I wonder, as we age does our hearing- the kind we most need -possibly improve? Are we less taken in by distractions, less taken in by all the noise, less bound by our need for approval, to perform and prove. Might we become more able to get out of our own way and really listen?

Maybe...

This is important, because how we pay attention affects how we listen for God's Word. What does it take to really hear God's WORD?

The Gospel of John begins,

“In the beginning was the Word [LOGOS], and the Word [LOGOS] was with God, and the Word [LOGOS] was God.”

John 1:1

LOGOS defies definition. I did some research.

In the Greek and Hellenistic world LOGOS achieved a comprehensive and varied significance... one might almost call it symbolic of the Greek understanding of the world and existence. TDNT IV, p. 77

“it is presupposed as self-evident by the Greek that there is in things, in the world and its course, a primary LOGOS, an intelligible and recognizable law, which then makes possible knowledge and understanding in the human LOGOS. But this LOGOS is not taken to be something which is merely grasped theoretically. It claims a man. It determines his true self and conduct. The LOGOS is thus the norm. (TDNT IV, p. 81)

In Stoicism, popular in the first century, LOGOS is a term for the ordered and teleologically (how the future comes together) oriented nature of the world. It is thus equated with the concept of God.

The Hebrew word in the Hebrew Scriptures for this (for “Word”) is DABAR, probably influenced Zeno, founder of Stoic philosophy.

In DABAR “word” appears as a material force which is always present and at work, what runs and has the power to make alive.

DABAR is the Divine Word of Creation. So Genesis 1, as you are well aware tells us,

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light...”

Genesis 1:1-2

Psalm 33 comments,

***“By the word [DABAR] of the Lord the heavens were made,
and all their host by the breath of his mouth.
He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle;
he put the deeps in storehouses.
Let all the earth fear the Lord;
let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded and it stood firm.”***

Psalm 33:6-9

All creation bears witness to God’s word.

The story of the Tiahuanacans fits here.

*Implication: To hear God’s Word, to take His Word in with every cell
in your body, go outside!*

Where is your place? Where might become such a place for you?

Go there, often. Listen. Hark.

DABAR tells the story of history, it narrates the world so that the thing
and its meaning may both be seen. DABAR is true, as in real.

*How can one hear, how does one “listen” to this DABAR, LOGOS,
WORD?*

I love how Jeremiah answered this question,

***“Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became
to me a joy and the delight of my heart.”*** (Jer. 15:16)

Let’s be clear. LOGOS in John 1:1 is not a “concept” we fit Jesus into.
John is describing what happened, an event, a coming.

***“And the Word [LOGOS] became flesh and lived among us, and
we have seen His glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of
grace and truth.”*** John 1:14

Here is a big hint. John uses this word LOGOS for the first time since v. 1. He's giving us the key to understanding John's Gospel. The eternal Word (LOGOS) enters the human and time-bound sphere by becoming flesh.

To put this in a profoundly simple way. Hold on tight... Keep in mind everything we've just said about LOGOS, DABAR, creation, history, Torah, life itself! You ready for this?

Jesus is the Word of God.

He is the LOGOS.

What the apostle says about who Jesus is may blow your mind...

“He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions or rulers or powers- all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of the cross.”

Colossians 1:15-20

We can see why Jesus said so many times, ***“Let him who has ears, let him hear.”***

HOW do we hear, how do we “take in” God’s Word, the LOGOS, the DABAR of God?

There’s a word, UPAKOUO= to listen under the authority of= from a kneeling position, with a heart of readiness to do. (Check Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 5:8f; II Cor. 10:5. In classic Greek it also had the meaning to answer the door, to open the door).

It's what Jesus was after in his Sermon on the Mount,

“He who hears these words of mine and acts upon them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.” (Matt. 7:24)

Lately I'm paying more attention to the kind of attention I am paying. I listen to the surgeon, *to hear* her report and directions. This is listening to do, to participate in my wife's healing. But I found I was also listening for her tone of voice, how she said what she was saying- listening for reason to hope- which she most certainly conveyed to me.

There is this another kind of listening, not for specific direction, but deeper, longer, farther back, for the sense of life, of belonging, of joy, hope, purpose, peace, rest, of friendship, for awe in what I can only glimpse, like a peek behind the rustling curtain, or taste, like a small piece of bread and sip of a tiny cup. Of wonder. Of what Jesus sees and has in Mind for you, and for me, for all of creation, what he prayed for in His prayer (John 17), for how all of this will be made new. Listening to take in through every cell in this olding body and, we pray, at the same time, this aging heart, mind and soul.

This sort of attention paying requires settling, waiting, helping the monkeys to calm and everyone look at the brightening horizon. It dawns on me getting older actually helps with this because of necessity we slow down. And when a person slows down, they notice more. This is aging well.

Maybe as we age we are also growing more able to take in the birth of Emmanuel, in a manger in a cave, to a young family- I can get this, grasp this scene because it happens thousands of moments every day. In the truest meaning of the word, the scene is “familiar”- the “family experience”. Perhaps you have been present for a birth. If you have you never forget it.

That moment you hold the child, or grandchild, someone's dear child, you behold the wonder and mystery of life, of humanity, you are aware of frailty, need for care, protection, of responsibility beyond anyone's ability, and in that moment perhaps a prayer rose out of your heart. You hold the little one, you behold a miracle. If you've lived some seasons you know all about this.

God knows we need to listen to His Word with every fiber of our bodies and being.

A little further on Paul's letter he helps us with this how to do this,

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Colossians 3:16-17

This Christmas season, pay attention to the kind of attention you are paying to others, but most importantly to God who is with you, me, us, speaking.

So we do what the angels urged, we HARK!

Let's talk about this.

Table Talk II

1. When have you caught yourself really listening? What resulted?
2. What do you find distracting you from listening for God's Word?
3. Where are some of your favorite outside spaces? How does being in those spaces help you hear God?
4. What do you think it takes for you to really hear His WORD?

Blessing

"May Christ, who by his Incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with his joy and peace; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. Amen."