

Science and Digital Briefs

By Shopper Editor Dave Bunting

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Image by Pete Whitehead

The Man and the Birds

This famous story as only Paul Harvey could tell it was aired over ABC Radio, on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2004.

Paul Harvey said,

“Unable to trace its proper parentage, I have designated this as my *‘Christmas Story of the Man and the Birds.’* You know, THE Christmas Story, the God born a man in a manger and all that escapes some moderns, mostly, I think, because they seek complex answers to their questions and this one is so utterly simple. So for the cynics and the skeptics and the unconvicted I submit a modern parable.

“Now 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 men. But he just didn’t believe all that incarnation stuff which the churches proclaim at Christmas Time. It just didn’t make sense and he was too honest to pretend otherwise. He just 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 Eve.’* He said he’d feel like a hypocrite. That he’d much rather just stay at home, but that he would wait up for them. And so he stayed and they went to the midnight service.

“Shortly after the family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window to watch the flurries getting heavier and heavier and then went back to his fireside chair and began to read his newspaper.

“Minutes later he was startled by a thudding sound. Then another, and then another. Sort of a thump or a 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 huddled miserably in the snow. They’d been caught in the storm and, in a desperate search for shelter, had tried to fly through his large landscape window.

“Well, he couldn’t let the poor creatures lie there and freeze, so he remembered the barn where his children stabled their pony. That would provide a warm shelter, if he could direct the birds to it.

“Quickly he put on a coat, galoshes, tramped through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the doors wide and turned on a light, but the birds did not come in. He figured food would entice them in. So he hurried back to the house, fetched bread crumbs, sprinkled them on the snow, making a trail to the yellow-lit wide open doorway of the stable. But to his dismay, the birds ignored the breadcrumbs, and continued to flap around helplessly in the snow. He tried catching them. He tried shooing them into the barn by walking around them waving his arms. 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 am a strange and terrifying creature. If only I could think of some way to let them know that they can trust me. That I am not trying to hurt them, but to help them. But how? Because any move he made tended to frighten them, confuse them. They just would not follow. They would not be led or shooed because they feared him.

“*‘If only I could be a bird,’* he thought to himself, *‘and mingle with them and speak their language. Then I could tell them not to be afraid. Then I could show them the way to safe, warm . . . 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 began to ring. The sound reached his ears above the sounds of the wind. And he stood there listening to the bells—*‘Adeste Fideles’—O Come All Ye Faithful*—listening to the bells pealing the glad tidings of Christmas.

“And he sank to his knees in the snow.”

Listen to Paul Harvey himself tell the story at:

[Info: shpr.fyi/harveymanbirds](http://shpr.fyi/harveymanbirds)

O Holy Night

The words to O Holy Night were written by Placide Cappeau, a French wine merchant and poet, not religious man. Yet, in the mid-1800s when asked by a local parish priest to write a Christmas poem, this is his poem.

The words were set to music in 1847 by Adolphe Adam, a French composer and music critic, known mostly for his ballets and operas.

Circumstances notwithstanding, Cappeau’s poem, *Cantique de Noël*, now set to Adam’s music, became an instant success. O Holy Night has been one of the most beloved songs of Christmas.

The above includes excerpts from sermonwriter.com



The Shepherds

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night

The shepherds were probably pre-teen children, elderly, disabled, and, to some extent, outcasts. But they had to be able to responsibly care for the sheep, the “riches” of the flock owner. Their work was, at times, challenging and dangerous. Shepherding is given as the high example of leadership and care, as God cares for us.

As the shepherds were the first to be notified of Jesus’ birth, they are a very critically essential part of God’s telling us of Jesus’ birth. The kingdom of God isn’t just for the insiders, but for outsiders, like those shepherds, like the poor people from whom Mary and Joseph came.

The shepherds were also the first evangelists.

Editor Dave and his wife got the Pfizer booster shot and strongly recommend all do so.

Israeli researchers said they found that a three-shot course of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine provided significant protection against the new Omicron variant over and above the two-shot treatment offers less protection.

We get the vaccination more to protect others around us than ourselves. Jesus’ commandment is “Love our neighbor as you love yourself”, or “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Being not vaccinated means we are not protecting our neighbor but endangering everyone around us to being infected by us when we catch it.

Over 90% of those now hospitalized and dying from COVID are unvaccinated.

Yes, there is a tiny risk in being vaccinated, just as, in every decision we ever make, there is not only a benefit but also a cost. Yes, a tiny percentage of those vaccinated still catch COVID but none involve hospitalization or death. Yes, there is a tiny risk that the vaccination will have some, almost always minor, adverse effects. We who choose vaccination have decided we are willing to accept those risks, pay that price, so we can avoid infecting our friends. We protect others as we would have them protect us.

Give your family and friends this great Christmas gift!

Dave Bunting, Dec. 20, 2021
References in links below items.
See these columns on my blog:
daverant.com