

15. Stop! Look! Listen!

In the early railroad decades of this century, it wasn't unusual for four different railroad companies to have trains - freight and passenger - passing through towns in the midwest. Those big steam engines always got attention. It was exciting to watch them take on water and coal, build-up steam and then tug away with their long string of cars.

Each locomotive had its own distinct steam whistle sound. Whether working in the fields in the spring and summer, or cutting wood in the winter, people would always know the time of day as they learned to recognize the whistle sounds of the various trains.

Out in the countryside where the train tracks and roads crossed, there would only be the familiar white railroad crossing sign. However, in town there were additional safety installations. One railroad company installed a clanging bell that would be set-off by the approaching train. Of course, on each engine there was a highly polished bell as well as the familiar steam whistle that could be heard for miles away providing the wind was in the right direction. One of the crossings had a sign with the words: STOP! LOOK! LISTEN! At another multi-crossing, as a train was approaching, a man would emerge from a nearby booth with his familiar STOP sign by day and a lantern at night. He was simply referred to as the "Flag Man". Later, of course, electric flashing lights and automatic gates replaced the flag man and the silent signs and, eventually, the old steam engines were replaced by the diesels.

STOP! LOOK! LISTEN! This type of sign would never work today. People wouldn't see it, let alone read it. And yet, it is good advice. It might be well for us to briefly consider those three words: STOP! LOOK! LISTEN!

We must STOP to take inventory...to see what great things God has done for us...to make certain we have our priorities straight, lest we be going on the dead run...STOP to make sure we are on the right track...STOP for rest and contemplation...STOP to consider possible dangers and pitfalls that may be lurking on our path...STOP to gain spiritual rest for our soul...STOP to commune in prayer with our heavenly Father...STOP to drink of the water that quenches all thirst.

Not only must we STOP, we must also LOOK. We must LOOK ahead...about us and within ourselves...LOOK up to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith...LOOK to the Lord for guidance, strength, comfort, peace, companionship, hope, assurance, forgiveness and salvation. Heed the holy writer who says, "Let your eyes LOOK directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Take heed to the path of your feet, then all your ways will be sure." ..."LOOK to me", the holy Lord God declares, "and be saved." May the language of our hearts be, "As for me, I will LOOK to the Lord, I will wait for the God of my Salvation; my God will hear me." *Micah 7:7*.

STOP! LOOK! LISTEN! We must faithfully LISTEN to our heavenly Father Who says to us, "This is My beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased; LISTEN to Him". *Matthew 17:5*. There are all kinds of voices out there in the world trying to get our attention. LISTEN to Him who created us, redeemed us and sanctified us. LISTEN to the holy, Spirit-filled, power-packed Word of our Lord. We must faithfully, diligently LISTEN for the purpose of discovering: What's the Lord Jesus telling me about Himself?...about myself?...What warning, admonition, instruction is there for me?...What does He want me to do or not do?... LISTEN to hear ever anew what He has done for us on the cross at Calvary; that He took our place, paid our price, that in Him we have eternal life.

How important it is that we pause from time-to-time; that we take inventory of our lives; that we make certain that we know from where we have come, why we are here, and above all, that we know where we are going. To that end it is vitally important that we STOP! LOOK! and LISTEN!

Stop! Look! Listen!

We Begin

Leader (L) and Group (G)

L: Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.

G: Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.

We Search Scriptures - John 10:14-16,27-28

L: Jesus said "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me -- just as the Father knows me and I know the Father -- and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.

We Meditate

Follow this outline as the meditation is presented

Trains in "the old days"

Steam whistles and bells

Signs, such as "Stop! Look! Listen!"

Stop! Look! Listen!: good advice for all of us:

STOP! - for rest and refreshment from God

LOOK! - for guidance, comfort, forgiveness
and salvation from Jesus

LISTEN! - for words of warning and
messages of mercy from God's Spirit
through His Word

From where have we come? Where are we going?

STOP! LOOK! and LISTEN! to find out

We Respond

L: God, our lives are always so busy.

G: O Father, help us to slow down, STOP, and be refreshed by Your ever-present love.

L: Everywhere we look we see sin and trouble--even within ourselves.

G: Help us to LOOK to You, O Jesus, for solutions and salvation.

L: We hear so many people promising us happiness through the things of this world.

G: Help us to LISTEN to Your Spirit-filled Word, O God, for it teaches that the only way to lasting joy is through You.

We Pray

Lord, what a privilege it is to be Your sheep. What a joy to have the gift of faith, by which we recognize Your voice as that of our Good Shepherd. Guard and guide us so that we may follow You all the days of our lives and then dwell with You in Your house forever. Amen.

