

“What God Can Do – ‘Ta Da’ to ‘Ah Ha!’”

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Luke 2: 25-32

Cathie Kelso
Wall Street United Church

It is No Secret What God Can Do Songwriter: Stuart Hamblen

The chimes of time ring out the news, another day is through
Someone slipped and fell, was that someone you?
You may have longed for added strength, your courage to renew
Do not be disheartened, for I have news for you

There is no night for in His light you never walk alone
Always feel at home, wherever you may go
There is no power can conquer you, while God is on your side
Take Him at His promise, don't run away and hide

It is no secret what God can do
What He's done for others, He'll do for you
With arms wide open, He'll pardon you
It is no secret what God can do

I often get inspiration for messages from hymns and worship songs. Music is a way God gets through to me. Some of you remember scripture verses; I remember lyrics. (And in my defense...many songs are based on scripture.)

My Dad and I used to faithfully watch the Gaither Gospel hour on PBS and the old hymn “It is No Secret” was a standard that was played often.

A couple of weeks ago Pastor Kim had prepared a sermon with the words – ‘*Ta Da*’ & ‘*Ah Ha*’ in it. But then the big snow storm hit and church was cancelled. I’m sure you will get to hear her message as soon as she recovers from this terrible virus and I know it will be totally different than this message; but I’m going to steal part of her title.

Through the words of this old hymn and the title ‘*ta da*’ and ‘*ah ha*’ this message was inspired.

Changing gears now....

OK, let’s all do this together. You can even stand up if you’re able. Hold your hands on your chest and throw them out... at the same time saying ‘**TA DA!**’ (Let’s do it again!) Kind of feels good doesn’t it? It gives you a lift!

Can you think of something that you’ve accomplished; that you’ve done all by yourself; or something that makes you feel good? That makes

you feel proud of yourself? And you're excited to say to others "Look what I've done!"

When we celebrate these things we've done all by ourselves, I like to call these '**ta da**' moments! '*Ta da*' moments can be fun and uplifting, but not all the time. Or is it maybe that the good feeling doesn't always last long?

Here's an example. A few months ago Our Kenyan Kids charity held a Paint Party Fundraiser. They're pretty popular these days and I've always wanted to go to one, but not because I felt overly talented or crafty. Everything you need to paint is supplied, including a picture to try and duplicate and an expert to tell you how to do it.

This is my result! '*Ta Da!!*'



This is what I accomplished; all on my own! Yes there were directions, but *I* had control of the brush!

Sometimes our '*ta da*' moments are not as meaningful to others as they are to us. I hung my creation proudly on my kitchen wall for a few months, but when I showed it off, there was mostly 'silence' and questioning looks. Eventually I got the hint. Funny how much praise I got when I moved my beautiful '*ta da*' artwork to cover up the holes on my laundry room wall. Hmm ...

So what could give us a better, longer lasting lift? Maybe even better than a '*Ta Da*' moment?

What about those times when we realize that someone bigger than ourselves...a force beyond our understanding or our ability to plan... results in something pretty amazing ... When we recognize how God has been at work for us. Well I like to think of these as '**ah ha**' moments! Say it with me... with feeling.... '**ah ha!**'

An '*ah ha*' moment can be kind of like an epiphany or a revelation. Like a light being turned on, helping you to see something you didn't see before ... whether it is a physical sighting or a spiritual realization.

'*Ah ha*' moments can be in the now; but also at times when you think back on something and you realize that God has been working all along in your situation! Maybe not in the way you planned (*leading to that 'ta da' party*) but accomplishing so much more than you'd ever dreamed of doing on your own.

Many times at our Celebrate Life evening service we hear speakers describe a life struggle and how God has helped them through it. For them *“It is no secret what God can do”*. They want to tell us about their positive God experience to encourage and build us up. They may not have seen God at work in the middle of their struggle; but they could look back later and see the path God had laid out for them and how he had given them the strength to get through.

Here’s a Biblical *‘ah ha’* moment. (whole story found in Luke 24:13-35)

Two followers of Jesus were walking on the road home to Emmaus, and talking about all the events around Jesus’ crucifixion, and trying to make sense of it all. Then suddenly, out of nowhere, Jesus was with them on the road and joined in their conversation; but they didn’t recognize him.

They began to tell this new traveler all the things that had happened. When they arrived home they invited him to stay for dinner. That’s when everything changed.

As Jesus broke bread with them he brought back memories of what he had said and taught earlier. Suddenly their eyes were opened and they had a personal encounter — an *‘ah ha!’* moment — when they realized they were sitting with Jesus!

Their *‘ah ha’* moment was captured in verse 32 when in awe they realized: *“Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”*

Another is found in Luke Chapter 2: 25-32. It’s the story of Simeon; an ordinary man who was devoted to serving his Lord. The Holy Spirit had told Simeon he would not die until he had seen the “Christ” and he had waited a long time for this promise to come true. When Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem, the Spirit led Simeon to go see this baby.

Simeon experienced a very special *‘ah ha’* moment when he laid eyes on the Christ child. He took him in his arms and was filled with awe and wonder at what his God had done. The promise made so long ago; now fulfilled. Simeon said “My eyes have now seen the Salvation of the World” and he was ready to depart from it. Simeon knew that this revelation — this *‘ah ha’* recognition of the promise now completed — was something only God could do!

A personal experience:

Going back awhile now. I had been working for 26 years at Hathaway Shirt Factory in Prescott when I developed a repetitive elbow injury. I had

been doctoring and doing what I was told, but my employer finally lost patience with my lack of healing.

They came to me with conditions and ultimatums on my employment, which included the very real threat of letting me go if I didn't comply.

I had my Doctor telling me not to return to this job because I would be hurt even more, and 'work' saying I would come back to this job; or else. To say I was stressed was an understatement.

Some friends had come together to pray with me, but I was a mess. Eventually they got through with an important lesson of learning to trust my situation to God. Give God your job, your finances, your future! Just give the whole situation to God!

The next morning God gave me the strength to make the difficult decision to *not* give in to the conditions work was demanding. As stressed as I was, I had to believe that whatever happened, God would help me.

That same afternoon I got a call from work, offering me a new, less physical and more suitable job in the plant, with absolutely no conditions whatsoever. It was a complete turnaround of the previous position they had taken!

On the way to the Doctor that afternoon my friend said to me: "Wow, that's pretty awesome how God worked that out!" I still remember the *feeling* that went through me when she said that. In that moment I realized that God had been at work all along. In that '*ah ha*' moment there was no doubt that God had 'everything' to do with this solution! In fact it was the only thing that made any sense.

More recently: an 'in the moment' '*ah ha*.'

On Sundays when I'm not here at Wall Street I'm usually worshipping in my home church, Roebuck United. Like many churches we have had a dwindling congregation for many years, to the extent that we were struggling to meet our financial commitments or maintain our aging building.

We agreed to make goals and timelines with the understanding that if we failed it would mean looking at other options for our church family.

Long story short: we didn't meet the goals. We began a search for alternative worship space, hoping to rent and reduce the costs of fuel, hydro and building upkeep that we couldn't afford.

Late summer I chaired a special meeting of our congregation. The first item we needed to cover was a motion to approve putting the church up for sale. There was immediate silence... painful silence. You could tangibly feel the pain in the room. This was a serious '*ah ha*'

moment...when the congregation finally got it... that it sank in that this is for real! ...It's not just talk anymore! Wow...this is scary! ...I didn't think we'd make it past that motion; but we finally did.

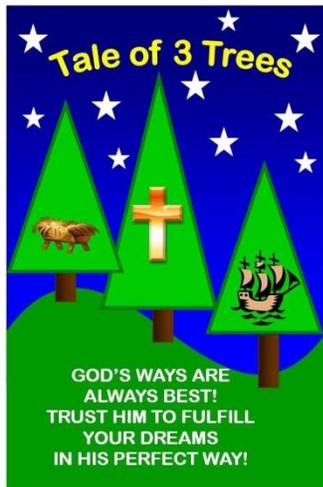
Sometimes 'ah ha' moments can be tough...'heavy revvies'! But sometimes they're needed to jolt you into action.

A lot of time, prayer and hard work went into the next few months. Sometimes we got tired and wondered if this was all for nothing; but now we can see that God was with us all along and continues to be with us in our new church home in of all places, the basement of the Grenville Snowmobile Club.

And so far so good... There is still much to do but we've been given reason to hope for a bright future.



I'd like to share this illustration that was quite popular on the Internet about "The Legend of the Three Trees".



Once upon a time, long, long ago, there were three baby trees growing up in the forest. One was an olive tree, one an oak, and the third, a pine tree. They talked and began to grow.

The olive tree told the others that when he grew up, he planned to have his beautiful wood made into a treasure CHEST, decorated with sparkling jewels.

"That's nothing" said the oak, "When I grow up I plan to be a mighty tree with strong sturdy wood just right for building a huge ship — a ship so wonderful that KINGS and queens would be carried across the oceans of the world."

The pine explained that it was his dream to grow to be a tall, majestic pine that would stay on the mountainside forever and POINT people to God in heaven.

The years went by and these trees grew and grew. Finally the day came when it was time for them to fulfill their destiny. They grew excited as they anticipated their long awaited dreams coming true.

Let's pause for a minute.... All the things the trees have mentioned so far are 'ta da' things! "Look what I'm planning to do", or "see the purpose I've dreamt for me!"

But God had a far better plan for each of them than they had ever imagined. As the story continues, let's watch for God's better, beautiful, rich, fulfilling 'ah ha' purposes for each of them.

The beautiful olive tree did not become a treasure chest, but a feeding box for animals. In that MANGER a virgin mother laid the greatest treasure of all time -- God's only Son, Jesus. 'Ah ha!'

The oak tree did not become a mighty ocean going vessel. It became a fishing boat which carried Jesus, the KING of Kings. 'Ah ha!'

The tall pine did not stay on the mountainside, but was cut down and made into a rough wooden cross. On that cross Jesus died to save people from their sins. And ever since, that cross has POINTED the way for people to find God. 'Ah ha!'

So much better! Not one of the trees got what they planned. But each one of them got more than they could have hoped for. So you see, God's ways and plans are not always our ways, but His ways are best for us.

Let's be open to the plans that God has for us. Let's look for how God has, and is, working in our lives. Let's not fear the now, but look to the future; trusting in God to make all things right.

1 Corinthians 2: 9 (CEV). "What God has planned for people who love Him is more than eyes have seen, or ears have heard. It has never even entered our minds!"

God's light shines bright in our lives; we just need to open our hearts and let God in.

Remember the words of that perfect hymn:

"It is no secret what God can do.
What He's done for others, he'll do for you.
With arms wide open he'll pardon you,
(try these additional lines)
*with arms wide open he'll work for you;
with arms wide open he'll work through you;
with arms wide open he'll see you through...*

It is no secret what God can do!"
'Ah Hah!' Amen, and thanks be to God.