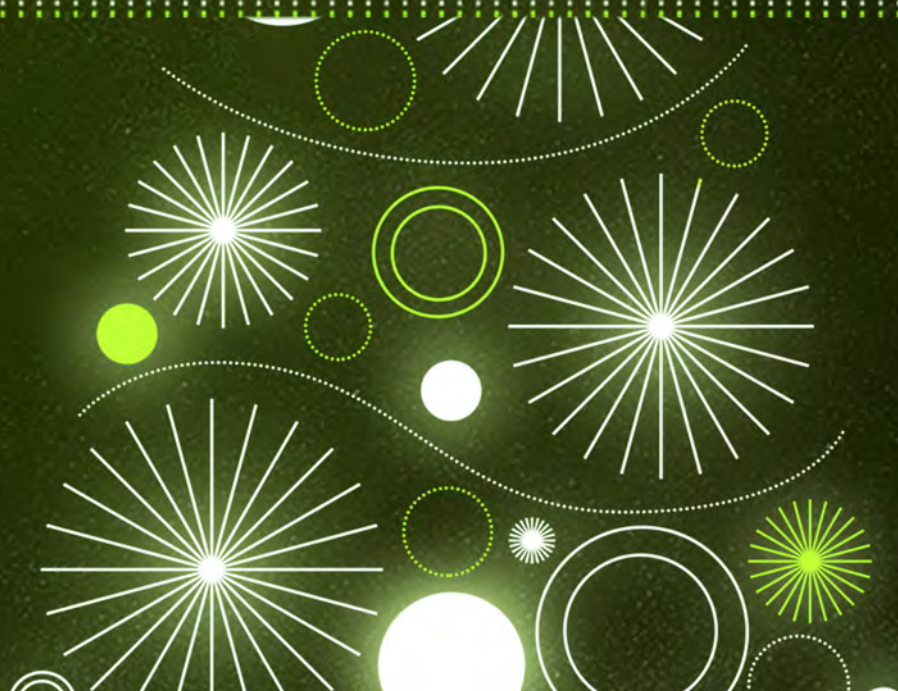




Songs of Christmas



Songs of Christmas:

A Calvary Christmas Devotional

How many Christmas songs are there?

Phil Barry conducted a search of the Blokur database in 2021 for songs with the word “Christmas” in the title. His search returned nearly 50,000 results.

And that doesn’t even include the countless songs we associate with the season that don’t mention Christmas by name—songs like “Frosty the Snowman,” “Jingle Bells,” “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year,” and “Let It Snow.” Clearly, there is no shortage of music celebrating this season.

Music is woven into the very fabric of how we celebrate Christmas. From carols sung by candlelight to familiar tunes playing in every store, songs have a unique power to stir our memories, shape our moods, and express our deepest beliefs.

But have you ever listened to the first songs of Christmas—the ones sung in connection with the birth of Jesus and recorded for us in Scripture?

In the opening chapters of Luke’s Gospel, we find four such songs: those of Mary, Zechariah, the angels, and Simeon. These are not merely ancient hymns preserved on the pages of Scripture; they are Spirit-inspired responses to the wonder of God’s salvation breaking into our world.

This Christmas at Calvary, our sermon series will focus on these Songs of Christmas. To accompany those messages, our pastoral and ministerial staff have prepared this devotional—a collection that reflects on both beloved Christmas songs and the timeless, trustworthy message they proclaim.

We invite you to use this devotional personally or as a family during this season. As you do, we pray you will rejoice in the good news of great joy for all people—that Jesus Christ, our Rescuer, has come. And that truly is something worth singing about, at Christmas and all year long.

Merry Christmas, brothers and sisters, Merry Christmas.

Christ our Savior has been born!

In Christ alone,
Pastor Justin

Behold the Lamb of God

*“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”
(John 1:29).*

Cherished Christmas Memories

Do you remember those early years as a child at Christmas time?

Christmas holds many wonderful memories for me. My father was our church’s music minister, and each year he faithfully led the Christmas Cantata and Christmas Eve service filled with beautiful carols and songs of our Savior.

Some of my most cherished memories are of our family loading up in our station wagon to sing Christmas carols for our elderly relatives. I can still picture the joy on their faces and the tears that flowed as we sang “Joy to the World,” “Silent Night,” and many other songs of Jesus’ life and love. What a blessing it was to lift our voices in praise of Jesus in the small living rooms of our loved ones.

Beholding the Savior

There are many beautiful carols we love to sing at this time of year. A lesser-known yet deeply meaningful song is “Behold the Lamb of God.” This song beautifully echoes John the Baptist’s declaration when he saw Jesus approaching:

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29)

One can almost picture John’s elation and exuberance as he lifted his eyes upon the Lord. How could he do anything else but boldly proclaim that the long-awaited Savior had come? No longer would there be a need for any other sacrificial lamb. Jesus would fulfill the Father’s plan by willingly giving His life for the redemption of sinners. John could not and would not be silent about Jesus and His gospel.

Our Response this Christmas

This Christmas, as we gather with family and friends to worship and celebrate our Savior, we will sing songs, light candles, and rejoice in His coming. We do all of this because Christ came to give us His eternal love, forgiveness, and salvation.

We were once walking in spiritual darkness, but now we live in the light of His glory and grace. How, then, could we ever be silent and keep the good news of Jesus to ourselves?

Consider

- ♦ Whom has God placed on your heart who needs to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord? Ask Him to use you to share His gospel with them.
- ♦ What act of kindness can you and your family do to bless a neighbor with God's love this Christmas?

Prayer

Father, thank You for sending Your one and only Son, Jesus, to be the Light of the World. Thank You for giving me Your love and the gift of salvation. Please anoint and use me to share Your gospel with those You place in my path. Thank You for answering my prayer. In Your saving Name, Jesus, Amen.

Take a Listen



Use the QR code to listen to one of my favorite versions of "Behold the Lamb of God" written by Andrew Peterson and Laura Story.

Written by John Griffin

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!’” (Luke 2:13–14).

A Song That Shapes Our Christmas

It’s difficult to imagine Christmas without singing or hearing this hymn. The hymn has been recorded by some of the most gifted talents of the last century. Written by Charles Wesley and later paired with music by Felix Mendelssohn, this hymn, inspired by the new life Charles Wesley experienced, does more than retell the nativity story. It expresses the joy of the Incarnation and the hope of the gospel. The Psalter Hymnal Handbook describes the hymn like this: “A curious mixture of exclamation, exhortation, and theological reflection. The focus shifts rapidly from angels to us to nations.”

Though Wesley did not like anyone altering his hymns, his friend George Whitefield did him a favor in changing the opening line to something more understandable. While the original music would have left this hymn in obscurity, one hundred years later, English musician William Hayman Cummings matched Wesley’s lyrics to a joyous melody by Felix Mendelssohn.

The Message of Heaven’s Song

*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail, the incarnate Deity
Mild He lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth.*

God Himself has become man to “raise the sons of earth.” He came to give us new life. At Calvary, we say He came to restore “image bearers through the gospel.” Paul wrote in Romans 8:29, “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

We are invited to participate in the heavenly celebration of our coming Savior and King, alongside the angels and shepherds (the lowest members of society). We are invited to join the triumph of the skies. All nations are invited to joyfully “rise.” We are invited to proclaim that Christ is born in Bethlehem. What a privilege and honor! And yet, the “important people” of the day, like

King Herod and his court, were not participants. Sadly, they missed the most important thing ever—the coming of the Son of God.

Our Response this Christmas

Typically, we are inundated with activities during the Christmas season (and throughout the year). But let's take time this season to celebrate, whether in the middle of the night (like the night of the Nativity) or at any other time. Let's joyfully proclaim that "you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him" (Colossians 2:13-15). We can celebrate peace and mercy on earth that has brought God and sinners to be reconciled. Take time to sing, even if you don't know how to sing. Give yourself that freedom every other day, for we were made to express Joy.

Reflection Questions

- ♦ Have you taken time this Christmas to joyfully celebrate the coming of your Savior?
- ♦ Do you see yourself as a victim of your circumstances, or through the eyes of heaven, seeing Christ's triumph?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank you and celebrate appropriately and joyfully Your coming and salvation. Thank you that You were "pleased with men to dwell" and You are our "Emmanuel"—God with us. You know our great need for You and eternal life. You came to give us new life and to restore what the enemy desired to steal. Thank You for Your Triumph over sin and death. Please grant us the grace to see our situation as you do and to rejoice accordingly. Amen.

Take a Listen



Use the QR code to listen to one of my favorite versions of "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" written by Charles Wesley with music composed by Felix Mendelssohn.

Written by Alex Alzamora

How Many Kings

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

We Fight for a Throne

Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq with a hold rivaling Thanos’ grip on the Infinity Gauntlet. He refused to loosen his grasp on power, even as the nation faced war and people suffered. He protected his position through intimidation and violence.

When the United States invaded in 2003, he refused to step aside. Once captured, he remained defiant and unrepentant.

Saddam Hussein is no abnormality. People tend to cling to power, position, and possessions, which is why the Christmas story is AMAZING!

Jesus Stepped Down from His

We fight to keep our thrones; Jesus stepped down from His. We cling to power; Jesus released His. We use people; Jesus gave Himself for people.

Christmas celebrates how the King’s mercy spares those of us who deserve the King’s wrath. Jesus came to deliver His enemies, not destroy them.

The modern Christmas song “How Many Kings” captures this truth in a series of stunning questions:

*How many kings step down from their thrones?
How many lords have abandoned their homes?
How many greats have become the least for me?
And how many gods have poured out their hearts
To romance a world that is torn all apart?
How many fathers gave up their sons for me?*

Only one King did this for us. Jesus stepped down from His throne, out of glory, and into the world to display His love and do what we could never do—save us from our sin.

Our Response this Christmas

One of the best places God expresses this is in Philippians 2:5-8. Paul writes, “...Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Earthly kings demand sacrifice from people; Jesus came to sacrifice Himself for people. He humbly came and was laid in a manger, but He grew to be a man who humbly laid the cross upon His back to pay for sin.

Consider

- ♦ Have you surrendered your life to Jesus, who sacrificed Himself for you?
- ♦ In what ways might God be asking you to follow Christ’s example to serve others in costly ways this Christmas and the new year?

Prayer

King Jesus, we are in awe that You stepped down from glory to meet our greatest need—for a sufficient Savior and the salvation only You could purchase. Thank You for humbling Yourself to pay the penalty for our disobedience. This Christmas, help us worship You as the only King worthy of devotion, and teach us to follow Your example of humility, love, and service. Amen.

Take a Listen



Use the QR code to listen to one of my favorite versions of “How Many Kings” written and composed by Jason Germain and Marc Martel.

Mary Did You Know

“And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her” (Luke 1:38).

A Heart That Said ‘Yes’

Each holiday season, the melodic hum of Christmas hymns and songs fills the air. Songs that cause us to reflect on the awe and majesty of the Savior King coming to earth, being born in the humblest of ways. One song that always causes me to reflect is Mark Lowry’s early 2000s ballad, “Mary Did You Know.” We can all learn from the series of questions posed to Mary. We can learn a multitude from the posture of her heart. A heart willing to say ‘yes’ to something she does not have all the pieces to.

*Did you know
That your baby boy
Has come to make you new?
This Child that you delivered
Will soon deliver you.*

She did not have the whole picture—the image of her son displayed on a cross, the concept of his sacrifice for all of humanity, or the disdain and hate that her son would receive on behalf of those He came to save. She did not know the future, but she trusted the one whose hands it was in. What a picture of full surrender.

The Mystery of God’s Plan

Luke 2:19 says, “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her. Mary said ‘yes’ to God without having the full picture. She surrendered her life, her child, her hopes, and dreams to the Lord without assurance of what her future would actually look like. Where she lacked understanding, God supplied peace. She stepped forward with complete faith that God would fulfill his promise to her. Mary’s full surrender can serve as a model for us. We can hold tight to the promises of God. We can have faith in his greater plan even when we do not yet understand.

Our Response this Christmas

This holiday season, as in every season, let us remember that having faith in God does not entitle us to the whole picture. Instead, putting our complete faith in God releases us from the tension of knowing it all and having all the answers.

Consider

- ♦ Where in my life is God calling me to surrender with an unconditional ‘yes’?
- ♦ How can I invite God to align my heart with His plan when I don’t see the whole picture?

Prayer

Lord, help me to respond to your plans for my life with full faith. Align my heart to your own. Help me to know that even in the uncertainty of day-to-day life, I can be certain of your plans for my life. Amen.

Take a Listen



Use the QR code to listen to one of my favorite versions of “Mary Did You Know?” written and composed by Mark Lowry.

Written by Grace Key

© Holy Night

“And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord’” (Luke 2:10-11).

A Birth Announcement for the World

As a grandmother to fifteen grandchildren, I remember many times eagerly sitting in a hospital waiting room or by my phone, to hear someone give that special announcement, “The baby is here!” Think of a time when you listened to a birth announcement—whether that of your own child, a friend’s, or one you saw on social media. The announcement declared the waiting was over! The child had arrived!

Christmas celebrates the expectation, joy, and fearful wonder all wrapped up into one baby. The Christmas hymn, “O Holy Night”, is like a birth announcement, not just for Mary and Joseph, but for the entire world.

Based on the birth of Christ as described in the Gospel of Luke, “O Holy Night” was written as a poem, called “Minuit, Chrétiens,” which is French for “Midnight, Christians.” Placide Cappeau, a merchant in southern France, wrote the poem in 1843 to celebrate the restoration of a local church’s organ. The musical score for the poem was composed by Adolphe Adam in 1847 and was translated into English in 1855.

The first verse says:

*O holy night, the stars are brightly shining;
It is the night of our dear Savior’s birth;
Long lay the world in sin and error pining;
Till He appeared, and the soul felt its worth.*

The Night Divine

We learn two important truths. Who came? Our Savior! And why did he come? To rescue a world in sin and error! He came to restore all creation to Himself. “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18).

Then, the first verse concludes:

*Fall on your knees; O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born.*

This is a call to action! These words call us to fall on our knees, to humble ourselves before a holy God, and to listen to the good news that the Christ has come. Scripture says “that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11, CSB).

When we truly realize that Jesus left His glorious place in heaven, came to earth, suffered, died, and rose again for us, our knees should drop to the ground, and our voices should raise a “hallelujah,” which means to “Praise the Lord”.

Our Response this Christmas

This Christmas, let’s spend time “falling on our knees” listening to what the angel proclaimed to the shepherds that holy night. “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, He is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). The birth announcement by the angel is for everyone. Do not be afraid to know the Savior, to fall on your knees before Him, and to ask His forgiveness.

Consider

- ◆ Have you ever asked God to forgive you for the sins you have committed?
- ◆ Have you taken time today to thank God for sending His Son?
- ◆ Is there someone with whom you can share this good news?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I fall on my knees and humbly ask to know You more. You are a great and mighty God, sending Your one and only Son to rescue me from this world full of sin and error so I can have a loving relationship with a forgiving God. Forgive my sins and show me how to love You more. Lead me to share Your good news with others. Amen.

Take a Listen



Use the QR code to listen to one of my favorite versions of “O Holy Night” written by Placide Cappeau with music composed by Adolphe Adam.

Written by Debby Martin

Love Has Come

“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him” (1 John 4:9).

The Gift of God’s Love

Christmas is exciting for children of all ages, with surprises wrapped in paper and bows, gifts shared with laughter, and hugs and joy overflowing. That same sense of wonder belongs at the heart of the very first Christmas morning.

Over 2,000 years ago, in a humble stable in Bethlehem, Mary and Joseph welcomed the greatest gift the world has ever received: the birth of Jesus, the Son of God. As they gazed at their newborn child lying in a manger, their hearts must have overflowed with joy. Yet imagine the smile on God’s face that night—the smile of a Father giving His Indescribable Gift to the world.

Love That Brings Life

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

God’s gift was a gift of love. Love came down to us in Jesus Christ, and with Him came hope. The angels declared it, the shepherds hurried to see it, and wise men from far away followed a star to worship the newborn King who came to be the Savior of the world (Luke 2:11).

No wonder Paul exclaimed, “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15)

This is the same message celebrated in the Christmas hymn “Love Has Come”. The song reminds us that God’s love is not just an idea, but a person—Jesus Himself.

*Love has come
For the world to know
As the wisemen knew
Such a long time ago*

Our Response this Christmas

That truth gives us reason to rejoice with childlike wonder again this Christmas. Love has come. Love has a name. Love is Jesus. Receive His love afresh this season and let it overflow from your life in kindness and grace. The Apostle John wrote, “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only Son into the world, that we might live through Him” (1 John 4:9).

Consider

- ◆ Do you know God’s gift of love—Jesus Christ—in a personal way?
- ◆ Is Jesus still only a story of a baby in the manger rather than your Savior who died, rose again, and lives forever?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ—the embodiment of perfect love. Thank You for shining Your light into our darkness and offering us love, hope, grace, and salvation. Help us to receive Your love fully and to share it freely with others. May our lives reflect the light of Christ in all we do. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Take a Listen



Use the QR code to listen to one of my favorite versions of “Love Has Come” written by Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, and Shane Keister.

Written by Bill Morgan

Joy to the World

“Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!” (Psalm 98:4).

A Song of Joyful Reign

The Christmas season brings excitement and expectation around the world. The hustle and bustle of Christmas shopping for gifts and food preparation for family, friends, and coworkers occupy our time and minds. Often, when Christmas Day comes and goes, when all the gifts we wrapped have been given, and when all the food has been eaten, a time of exasperation and feeling of loss can follow as many end up asking the question, “Is this it?”

My favorite song to hear in the shopping malls, churches, and on the radio during the Christmas season is “Joy to the World.” First, this song helps me understand why there is Christmas—the birth of the King, Jesus, in a manger. It is an invitation to sing praises. It declares God’s faithful fulfillment to send the promised Messiah. This song helps me look forward to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ as the triumphant King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Source of Joy

Isaac Watts penned “Joy to the World” not as a Christmas carol, but as a poetic interpretation of Psalm 98, which looks forward to the second coming of Christ. Yet its message resonates deeply with the Incarnation—the moment Watts invites us to rejoice because the King reigns. His words echo the psalmist’s call for all creation to respond; fields, floods, rocks, hills, and plains—all bursting into song. This joy is not passive; it’s active, contagious, and rooted in the reality of Christ’s rule and redemption that has touched earth.

Our Response this Christmas

The hymn calls us to prepare our hearts. In the busyness of life, it’s easy for distractions to crowd out joy. But when we make room for Christ—through prayer, worship, and surrender—joy flows freely.

The hymn gives a gentle challenge: “Let every heart prepare Him room.” In a world full of distractions, are we making space for the Savior? Joy begins when we welcome Him—not just into our celebrations, but into our everyday lives.

Consider

- ◆ Have you prepared Him room? What areas of your life do you need to surrender to the Lordship of Christ?
- ◆ Will you choose joy by offering your life as a living sacrifice to Him daily (Romans 12:1-2)?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for coming into our world. I surrender to your Lordship the areas of my life where I still claim my own. Forgive me for trying to run my life according to my own selfish ends. Help me to trust Your good and perfect will revealed in Your Word.

Take a Listen



Use the QR code to listen to one of my favorite versions of “Joy to the World” written by Isaac Watts with music composed by George Frideric Handel and Lowell Mason.

Written by Michael Roxas

In the Bleak Midwinter

“The whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now” (Romans 8:22).

Hope in the Stillness

We don’t know whether Jesus was actually born on December 25—or even in December at all. Theologians and historians have searched for centuries to determine His exact birthdate, but to no avail. Some believe December 25 is the day; many do not. Yet the actual date doesn’t matter. What matters is that this season invites us to celebrate the coming of the Messiah and reflect on the world into which He came.

The old carol “In the Bleak Midwinter” helps us picture that world. You may not know this hymn—it’s rarely sung in Baptist churches and doesn’t even appear in the Baptist hymnal! Written by English poet Christina Rossetti and set to music by Gustav Holst, its haunting beauty captures the stillness and longing before our Savior’s arrival.

*In the bleak midwinter
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen,
Snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter,
Long ago.*

We don’t experience much of a winter in Southeast Texas, but in colder places, winter is a season of waiting. Plants and animals lie dormant, and the earth itself rests beneath blankets of snow and ice, waiting for spring. Yet that stillness is necessary for new life to emerge.

Silence Broken

So it was with the world into which Jesus came. For nearly 400 years, God had not spoken through any prophet. Hope seemed frozen. As Romans 8:22 says, “The whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” At just the right time—like the first warmth of spring—Christ came and brought life to a lifeless world.

Our Response This Christmas

The same is true of our hearts before Jesus enters them. Cold and barren, they await the Savior who breathes life into what was dead. God promises, “I will give you a new heart...a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26). May we give thanks this Christmas for the life-giving work He has done in us!

Consider

- ♦ If you find yourself in a ‘winter season’ now, will you place your hope and trust in Christ alone to bring new life to the barren soil of your heart?
- ♦ How can you rest in His timing when answers feel delayed?

Prayer

Our Father, thank You that at the perfect time You sent Your Son to bring life to dead places. Thank You for the resurrection power Your Spirit brings to our hearts. Amen.

Take a Listen



Use the QR code to listen to one of my favorite versions of “In the Bleak Midwinter” written by Isaac Watts with music composed by George Frideric Handel and Lowell Mason.

Written by Adam Shafer

Silent Night

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!’” (Luke 2:13-14).

No Fanfare

Back in 1818, in a small Austrian village, “Silent Night” was sung for the very first time. It wasn’t loud or flashy, and it didn’t ring with jingle bells or bright fanfare. It was simple and still. It was an invitation to pause and witness the Savior’s birth in the quiet of a holy night.

This carol was written in a time of hardship and simplicity. In the village of Oberndorf, Austria, a young priest named Joseph Mohr and a schoolteacher named Franz Gruber created “Silent Night” for a Christmas Eve service when the church organ was broken. With just a guitar and two voices, they sang of the peace and wonder of Christ’s birth. In a world filled with war and poverty, this gentle song offered a ray of hope and calm.

One of its most famous lines says: “Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright.” That phrase captures something we all long for—peace. Not just the absence of noise, but the presence of calm, light, and love. Silent Night reminds us that the first Christmas didn’t happen in a palace or under fireworks. It happened in the stillness of a stable, under stars, where the Prince of Peace entered our world.

The Gift of Peace

The angels declared at Jesus’ birth that His coming was to bring “peace among those with whom he is pleased!” The birth of Jesus brought the promise of peace—peace with God and peace in our hearts. Silent Night puts that message to melody. Even though the world around us may feel chaotic, Christ offers a quiet center—a holy calm in the midst of the storm.

Our Response this Christmas

Christmas reminds us that God doesn’t always shout to be heard. Sometimes, He whispers. He moves in silence, in stillness, in softness. When life is loud and overwhelming, “Silent Night” calls us back to the quiet truth of the manger: Christ has come. God is with us. Peace is possible. Not because everything is perfect, but because Jesus has entered our imperfection.

Consider

- ◆ Where in your life do you need peace right now?
- ◆ What would it look like to pause this season, to be still and listen for the quiet presence of Christ?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are the Light in the stillness, the Peace in the chaos, the Savior in the silence. In this season of noise and busyness, help us to be still and know that You are God. Let Your peace fill our hearts this Christmas. Amen.

Take a Listen



Use the QR code to listen to one of my favorite versions of “Silent Night” written and composed by Joseph Mohr and Franz Gruber.

Written by Dalton Washburn