



The Senior Scene

Love people. Know Jesus. Live Transformed.

Volume 33

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The Fullness of Time

When the fullness of time had come, God sent His son... (Galatians 4:4)

Anticipation is one of the great joys of Christmas. There's a sense of childlike excitement and expectation in our family celebrations and even more, as we marvel anew at the coming of "God with us."

In the world into which Jesus was born, there was a different kind of anticipation. For Israel, it was a time of social oppression and spiritual hunger. After centuries of waiting for the promised Messiah, their heart's cry was for deliverance.

And then it happened - *the fullness of time*. But the birth of Jesus was not the beginning of God's redemptive plan. God had not simply been sitting in heaven watching and reacting as human history unfolded. No. From the beginning He has been directing His divine plan of redemption. In fact, before the heavens and earth were created, God's plan to reconcile humanity was already in place (1 Peter 1:20). Scripture reveals the much bigger picture of what He was doing in the world as He prepared it for the advent of His Son.

Starting in Genesis we see that humanity needed reconciliation with God because we had all been tainted by the sin of Adam and Eve. And immediately the Lord promised deliverance through "the seed of the woman" (Genesis 3:15). Then God designated Abraham to be the ancestor of the One who would bless all nations (Genesis 12). Further on, God foretold that a ruler would come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). Centuries later, God selected the house of David to be the one through which a King would come whose kingdom would never end.

Then as the time of the promised One drew near, God used the scheme of a Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, to bring Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem to fulfill the prophecy that the King would come from there. These are only a few proofs of God orchestrating His redemptive plan from the beginning. One of the wonders of the Christmas

story is the amazing detail Scripture provides—centuries before any of it occurred! Jesus' birth and life is the fulfillment of over 400 prophecies.

God's plan continued to move forward even when it seemed like the odds were against it. As God's people waited throughout centuries—throughout all the turmoil of their history, God was using it all as He forged a path toward a cradle in Bethlehem through which the Messiah would enter our world. All the time He was preparing their hearts. Christ's birth was not a random act in history but an appointment that came when God said the time was right—the time He chose in alignment with His redemptive purpose.

And He sent not just any deliverer, but His own Son! Sometimes we hear it so often we overlook the wonder of that statement—God Himself sent His Son to initiate a relationship with us! He wanted to offer redemption and reconciliation that much. And now He also calls us His beloved children.

This is the glorious reality for everyone who has accepted His gift. The fullness of time came 2025 years ago, and we are members of His family. We have a new identity in Christ, a new relationship with the Father, an ever-present help in the Holy Spirit, and a new family of brothers and sisters in the church.

And His plan is not yet complete. Another divine appointment will come in the "fullness of time". He is again preparing our hearts for a time when God will "bring all things on heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Ephesians 1:10). One day at God's ordained time, Jesus will come again. Our redemption will be complete, and we will receive our imperishable, undefiled, and unfading inheritance (1 Peter 1:4).

As we anticipate the joys of celebrating the first coming of Christ, let's also contemplate the joy we have in the blessed hope of His coming again... when the fullness of time has come... once more.



Winter/Spring Bible Study

The Parables of Jesus

Thursdays February 26 thru April 16 at
10AM
in the Edinburgh Room.

Jesus often used ordinary situations to communicate extraordinary truth. In this study, we will explore Jesus' kingdom-focused parables to see how stories told over 2000 years ago are still life-changing today as they reveal to us the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

Canceled Stamps for Ministry



Just a reminder that MPC collects cancelled stamps. The stamps are sent to the Alliance Stamp Ministry where they are used to raise funds to support the spread of the Gospel in Spanish by radio and by printed material. So, as you receive Christmas cards, don't toss the envelope until you have cut off the cancelled stamp – please leave at least ¼-inch border around the stamp if possible. Please drop off your stamps in the basket in the Connection Corner or with Dee in the church office.

Christmas Eve
at MPC
CANDLELIGHT SERVICES
3:00 | 7:00 | 9:00
Rejoice

Rejoice with us this Christmas Eve as we celebrate the greatest gift, the birth of our Savior, Jesus! Come and experience the wonder of Christmas as we gather to worship in our newly renovated sanctuary!

Advent Prayer

Henri Nouwen

Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light
and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon
our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do
seek quiet spaces to
hear your voice each day.

We who are anxious
over many things
look forward to
your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways
long for the
complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy
seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people,
walking in darkness
yet seeking the light.

To you we say, "Come Lord
Jesus!"
Amen

God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

God rest ye merry, gentlemen,
let nothing you dismay,
remember Christ our Savior
was born on Christmas Day
to save us all from Satan's power
when we were gone astray.

Refrain: O tidings of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy.

From God our heavenly Father
a blessed angel came
and unto certain shepherds
brought tidings of the same;
how that in Bethlehem was born
the Son of God by name. [Refrain]

"Fear not," then said the angel,
"Let nothing you affright;
this day is born a Savior
of a pure virgin bright,
to free all those who trust in Him
from Satan's power and might." [Refrain]

The shepherds at those tidings
rejoiced much in mind,
and left their flocks afeeding,
in tempest, storm, and wind,
and went to Bethlehem straightway,
the Son of God to find. [Refrain]

But when to Bethlehem they came,
Whereat this infant lay,
They found Him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay;
His Mother Mary kneeling down,
Unto the Lord did pray. [Refrain]

Now to the Lord sing praises
all you within this place,
and with true love and brotherhood
each other now embrace;
this holy tide of Christmas
all other doth deface. [Refrain]

"God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen" is one of the oldest Christmas carols that is still sung today. It has often been misunderstood because of a misplaced comma! Instead of "God Rest, You Merry Gentlemen", it should read: "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen". The song is not about "merry gentlemen" needing rest, but rather is about the birth of Christ from Luke. The title and first line, "God rest ye merry" is an old English phrase meaning: "may God grant you peace and happiness," an expression

of the reason for Christmas joy as we remember the Savior's birth.

The next two stanzas tell the story of the angel's message to the shepherds and the next two tell of the shepherds visit to the Christ-child. The final stanza is an echo of Zechariah's prayer found in Luke 1:68 – "Praise to the God of Israel, who has come and redeemed His people..." Throughout history, the carol has had as many as nine verses, but today only 3 or 4 are typically sung.

The writer of this traditional English carol is unknown, though we know the lyrics and music date back to the 16th century or earlier. In the 16th Century, church music was typically sung in Latin and was dark and rather somber. Consequentially, most church goers did not like the religious songs of the period. Also at this time, one of the most profound shifts in the church was the desire to translate the Bible and compose worship music in the common languages. As lay people encountered God in personal and living ways and their understanding and gratitude of the Gospel began to swell, so did their desire to sing about it. So, they sang the more uplifting songs. The nightwatchmen are said to have sung this carol as they walked the streets of London.

The first printed version of the song appeared in 1760—when it was referred to as "Tidings of Comfort and Joy" and was printed on broadsides – large pieces of paper printed only on one side (like a poster) enabling a publisher to publicize events or to publicize popular songs and ballads.

The melody and lyrics were first published together in 1833 in a collection titled, "Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern," compiled by William Sandys, an English solicitor and a member of a publication society. After this collection came out, the popularity of the carol soared. In 1843, the song was mentioned by Charles Dickens in *A Christmas Carol*, as Scrooge censures carolers who are singing the song. And the carol has endured.

In today's world filled with unrest, we, too, need the message, "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen." This Christmas season, may you "rest merry" in the peace and true happiness that our Father provides through His Son, Jesus. And may we sing these carols of praise to Him with uplifted voices as we celebrate the real comfort and joy that is only found in Jesus.



Foods for the Holidays - The leftover letters reveal this month's Scripture

P	O	R	K	A	N	D	S	A	U	E	R	K	R	A	U	T	C	O	M
M	E	I	C	T	S	H	R	I	M	P	C	O	C	K	T	A	I	L	T
O	K	T	O	C	W	T	S	L	L	O	R	N	O	M	A	N	N	I	C
H	A	E	O	C	H	P	U	M	P	K	I	N	P	I	E	L	O	H	U
R	C	I	K	A	I	R	D	O	W	H	E	I	P	N	A	C	E	P	T
A	E	T	I	N	P	E	I	T	R	W	I	N	E	S	E	E	E	C	O
V	S	I	E	D	P	E	G	S	R	P	Y	O	T	U	S	L	H	D	U
S	E	Z	S	Y	E	O	A	D	T	N	S	U	G	E	O	E	D	S	T
R	E	D	I	C	D	E	L	L	U	M	F	L	A	R	X	H	E	E	C
E	H	E	K	A	C	T	I	U	R	F	A	N	E	M	A	O	E	T	O
W	C	K	A	N	R	W	S	I	I	P	D	S	I	S	T	V	L	A	O
E	S	A	E	E	E	R	L	N	P	C	S	X	P	A	S	S	Y	D	K
K	L	B	T	E	A	S	G	L	R	A	S	R	T	U	W	U	T	A	I
S	L	B	S	E	M	L	E	A	C	E	I	O	A	E	D	I	R	S	E
T	O	H	P	A	T	S	C	N	I	M	P	P	E	Y	O	D	U	B	S
I	R	R	H	U	A	K	A	R	E	D	P	T	M	S	P	L	I	A	L
U	T	N	R	L	E	E	R	R	E	L	P	S	E	T	O	H	E	N	E
R	N	K	A	R	B	E	I	H	E	O	C	O	C	O	A	O	L	O	G
F	E	D	S	N	B	B	S	C	T	O	S	O	N	R	D	W	G	O	O
Y	S	R	E	N	K	A	R	A	R	P	F	S	I	E	T	T	A	L	F
O	E	E	A	U	M	I	T	N	R	F	T	E	M	O	C	H	A	V	L
E	R	R	R	Y	S	O	T	I	E	H	S	U	G	A	R	A	P	S	A
G	C	R	E	P	E	S	T	E	C	H	O	C	O	L	A	T	E	I	M
N	G	T	O	S	I	Z	T	S	P	I	D	D	N	A	E	G	E	V	B
P	T	R	I	F	L	E	R	O	P	E	R	B	U	N	D	T	E	N	D



APPLE CRISP
APPLE SALAD
ASPARAGUS
BAKED ZITI
BRUSSEL SPROUTS
BUNDT
CANDY CANE
CHEESE AND CRACKERS
CHEESE CAKE
CHEX MIX
CHOCOLATE
CHRISTMAS PUDDING
CINNAMON ROLLS



COCOA
COFFEE
COOKIES
CORN
CRANBERRIES
CREPES
CRESENT ROLLS
CUT OUT COOKIES
DATES
FRUIT SKEWERS
FRUITCAKE
FUDGE
GOOSE



GRAVY
GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE
HAM
LATTE
LEG OF LAMB
MASHED POTATOES
MINCEMEAT PIE
MOCHA
MULLED CIDER
PEARS
PECAN PIE
PORK AND SAUERKRAUT

PRIME RIB
PUMPKIN PIE
SHRIMP COCKTAIL
SPRITZ
STEAK
STUFFING
SWEET POTATOES
TRIFLE
TURKEY
VEGE AND DIP
WHIPPED CREAM
WINE

