

The Sacred Songs of Christmas Unfold Comfort, Redemption, and Joy!

The Nativity of Our Lord is the highlight of the anticipatory and joyous Advent-Christmas seasons. These days on our calendar are an awe-inspiring celebration as we remember God's ancient promises of the Christ who enters our world as the Word Incarnate and saves His people from their sins.

The OT prophets foretold His coming and entrance into this dark and sinful world to defeat Satan and set us free from sin (Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 7:14, Micah 3:1). Peter writes, "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who spoke of this grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to determine the time and circumstances ..." of not only His earthly arrival, but especially His suffering and death, to redeem us from sin, death, and the power of Satan (1 Peter 1:10).

Even the angels in heaven looked forward to the Lord's redemption and cheered it on like football fans at a college stadium as the Light of God's grace revealed itself in real human history and they witnessed sin-enslaved souls being set free by Christ and welcomed into the glories of heaven (1 Peter 1:12, Luke 15:10).

Then, when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth one of His thousands upon thousands of angels, awaiting His beckon call, to inform the shepherds who were keeping watch over their flock by night that their long-awaited Savior has come into the world. "Fear not," said he, "for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11), and when this divine announcement ended, a heavenly host joined him in the fields and burst forth in song, singing: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, Good will to men" (Luke 2:14).

Over the centuries, lowly men and women of dust, gifted hymnists and musicians, who heard the glad tidings of great joy in faith followed suit, putting their talents to use for the kingdom of God and skillfully composed to Immanuel beautiful Christmas hymns, carols, and melodies for both young and old to sing.

Do you enjoy singing these Christmas hymns and carols at home and church? Charles Wesley taught:

*Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!" (LSB 380:1)*

In beautiful simplicity Martin Luther writes,

*Welcome to earth, O noble Guest,
Through whom the sinful world is blest!
You came to share my misery
That You might share Your joy with me.
Ah, Lord, though You created all,
How weak You are, so poor and small,
That You should choose to lay Your head
Where lowly cattle lately fed!
Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Prepare a bed, soft, undefiled,
A quiet chamber set apart
For You to dwell within my heart.*

(LSB 358:8-9, 13)

Birgitte Katerine Boye joyfully sings:

*Rejoice, rejoice this happy morn,
A Savior unto us is born,
The Christ, the Lord of glory!
His lowly birth in Bethlehem
The angels from on high proclaim
And sing redemption's story!
My soul, extol
God's great favor;
Bless Him ever
For salvation;
Give Him praise and adoration! (LSB 391)*

The sacred songs of the new-born King unfold and allow us to sing redemption's story. We eagerly tell our spouse and children the true story of a noble Guest, clothed in human flesh, who came to earth and saved us from sin, death, and the grave. The new-born King, Jesus Christ, shared our misery and tasted death so that He might share His unending joy with us children of men!

At Christmastime, our lips cannot remain silent and we sing of the glory due His name. We join others in the cold of night and travel to church to proclaim together the glad tidings of His lowly birth, His suffering and death, and His glorious resurrection which make known the gift of His salvation to the entire world.

In his catchy little hymn, August Rische concludes:

*God loves me dearly, He sent forth Jesus,
Grants me salvation, My dear Redeemer,
God loves me dearly, He sent forth Jesus
Love even me. (Refrain) And set me free. (Refrain)*

Refrain: *Therefore I'll say again:
God loves me dearly,
God loves me dearly,
Loves even me. (LSB 392:1, 3)*

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

– Pastor Cliff Adair