

# Songs of the Savior

## O Come, All Ye Faithful

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

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December 3, 2023

This Christmas Carol, O Come All Ye Faithful, was first printed in written form in 1751 by John Francis Wade. But many people believe that this hymn has been around since at least the early 1600s. It's a beautiful song that many of us know, and it's usually sung around the world in churches at Christmas time. It has a catchy tune that often gets stuck in your head, and the lyrics are beautiful, and many of us know them by heart.

"Oh, come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant. O come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem. Come and behold him. Born the king of angels. O come, let us adore him. Christ, the Lord. Sing choirs of angels. Sing in exaltation. Sing all ye citizens of heaven above. Glory to God, all glory in the highest. O come, let us adore Him.

Christ, the Lord. Yea, Lord, we greet thee born this happy morning. Jesus to thee be all glory given. Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing. O come, let us adore Him. Christ, the Lord. This song is a celebration hymn. We are proclaiming the Lord's birth. We are saying when we sing this song, the Messiah has come, and with those words, everything changes.

The song isn't meant to be sung in a solemn tone said with sadness. Instead, it is meant to burst with life. It is a call to action for those of us that follow Jesus. You see, in our culture, you and I have the distinct advantage as followers of Jesus Christ during the Christmas season. We are given an open door to talk about our faith and what we believe. It's a time of celebration.

People look forward to Christmas, and it's a chance for us to share about the birth of our Messiah. It is a time of victory. I think my favorite version of this song, "Oh, Come All Ye Faithful," is by a group called Pentatonix because it captures this vibe of victory. And I will play that song to close the service as we're leaving so you can hear that.

When I listen to their version of the song, for whatever reason, I get an image in my head of a tribe celebrating a victory after a hard-fought battle, and they are coming back returning, and everybody is celebrating a victory. I love this picture because when Jesus was born, it was the beginning of the end for our enemy. What victory am I talking about? What victory are we proclaiming? Who or what, some may ask, has been conquered?

Why should we be so excited about the birth of a child? Today, my goal is that we would be reminded why we adore Him. If you would open your Bibles with me to Luke chapter 2, we will read a section of the familiar story, Luke chapter 2, starting in verse 1. Again, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, in the New Testament there, the gospels. Luke chapter two, let me pray, and then we will read the text.

Heavenly Father, we have gathered today to adore you, still amazed that you would send your Son, Jesus, in the form of a man to experience death, even death on a cross for our salvation because of my sin, because of my mistakes, so that I could be made right with you and have a relationship with the king of kings and the Lord of lords.

And so, Father, we are humbled and we are grateful, and we come to offer you our praise. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Luke chapter 2, starting in verse 1, the familiar words. "In those days, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world." This was the first census, Luke tells us, that took place while Corinneus was governor of Syria, and everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he belonged to the house and the line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.

She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

Today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord, and this will be assigned to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

Suddenly, a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth, peace to those on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So the shepherds hurried off and they found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger.

When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what they had been told about this child. And all who heard it were amazed, they were amazed at what the shepherds had said to them, "But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen which were just as they had been told." When I read Scripture, especially familiar sections of Scripture that I've heard or read many times, in order to make it real, I try to imagine myself in the story.

I try to wonder, what would it be like if I were there? So let's do that today together. Let's imagine that we are in the fields with the shepherds. It's late at night. It's dark. Probably darker than any of us could even really comprehend because we live in a society where there's light pollution, meaning it's very hard to get in complete darkness. But of course, in that time, maybe there was a fire going on. Maybe you know there was a few fires in the city off in the distance, but it's very dark.

They're guarding their sheep from threats. And so this group of shepherds might have a whole herd of sheep, and maybe they take turns. And some stay up, and some get the night shift, and others get to rest, and they kind of rotate. But this particular night, something strange happens for those that are awake, an angel appears, and Luke tells us that the glory of the Lord shines around them. And the angel begins to share with them the news that everybody has been waiting for.

Every Jew, every Israelite, they are entrusted. These shepherds in that field are entrusted with the good news. They know first what is happening. They are the ones that break the story. And of course, Luke tells us they were terrified as you and I would be. If you're sitting in a dark field and all of a sudden, this bright light shines and there's an angel, a figure there that begins speaking to you. But things get even crazier if you and I are out in that field because it's not just one angel.

After he is done talking, Luke tells us that there is a company of heavenly hosts that show up, and they start singing. I imagine it was loud and beautiful and terrifying all at the same time. It's something that these

shepherds would never forget. And after the heavenly host returned back to heaven, the first thing that the shepherds do is go and check out what they were told. They ask, "Is it true?"

Could this really be what is happening?" Imagine the questions that are running through their minds. If this is the Messiah, if this is the Lord, and He's coming in the form of a baby, can he talk right out of the womb? What does he look like? Some people wonder how turkey became the normal meal for Christmas. And I saw a meme on Facebook this last week that kind of answered that question. I'll let you look at it and read it for yourself.

It takes some of you a little longer to get that. That's okay. The normal response for these shepherds was to go and tell everyone what they heard. It couldn't be kept a secret. It was so much greater than the latest movie that was out or the new toy that was coming. They couldn't wait to share the good news that the long-awaited Messiah had arrived, but he was coming in the form of a baby.

I want to pause for a moment in this story to recognize that these shepherds, never once does Luke record for us that they questioned God or the angel from the story they heard. They received this news at face value. They exhibit the faith of a child. They simply believe. And this is amazing because back in this culture, shepherds were often viewed as slow. They were not as smart as the average person.

They were the lower class of society. Many people looked down upon the shepherds. Why would God choose them to be the ones that carry the good news of the birth of our Savior? It reminds me of what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 11:25. At that time, Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children." The lowly shepherds receive the Messiah with joy while the religious elite will reject him.

Think about that. What an amazing story that the shepherds would be able to grasp this amazing thing that is happening while the religious elite, those that studied the Scriptures, those that knew the Old Testament, those that knew the prophecies would reject Jesus as the Messiah. I think about this in my own life and how many people I know who are sometimes too smart for their own good. They overthink life.

They overthink what we are. My prayer for us during this season is that you and I would have the faith of a child, the faith of the shepherds. After the shepherds went and would visit the Messiah, they would go and share the good news, and you and I are given that same privilege. We are to invite those around us to come and behold Him. God came into His creation in a form that you and I could receive.

Many people will often ask the question, "Why did God choose to come in the form of a baby?" And as I think through that, I don't know many people or anyone who is afraid or intimidated by a baby. If God came in all of His glory, I don't think that you and I would be able to handle Him. It would scare us. And so God chose to come in the most non-threatening form possible for our benefits.

As we go on in the story of Luke chapter 2 in verse 20, we read that the shepherds returned. They returned to their fields. You see, the shepherds still had a responsibility in life. They had a job to do, but they had new information. And so they were glorifying and praising God as they would go back into the fields because that new information would change their outlook on life. They returned glorifying, praising God.

You see, our knowledge of the birth and the death and the resurrection of our Savior inspires our worship of Him. But you and I still have a job to do. We still have responsibilities. We still have things that we have to accomplish, but our outlook has changed. We continue to share the same good news that those shepherds did 2,000 years ago.

It truly is our privilege that we have been given to share the good news that the Messiah has come and we can proclaim to everyone, "Oh, come, let us adore Him." At the same time, it is good for us to continue to

do our work. It is good for us to keep our hand to the plow while we await His return. You see, the victory is ours. This Christmas season, don't forget to celebrate the victory that comes through Jesus Christ.

Remember that He is the reason why we celebrate Christmas in the first place, and it is an amazing opportunity to share Jesus with family and friends and neighbors who don't know about Him. I tried to think of a particular action step that I could give to us all, regardless of age or where we're at in our walk with Jesus, regardless of how old we are again and what was something that we all could do to point people back to Jesus during this season.

And I came up with something that I think is very simple. All of us can do. It's a simple action step. I would encourage you to put out some type of manger scene in your yard this year. Just put it out there. It's a great conversation starter. Maybe it's a picture. They have banners you can put on your garage. There's things that you can buy to put out as a manger scene. It's simply a reminder of what we are celebrating. I love when I drive through town or I drive around and I see the manger scene out in people's yards because it gives me yet another reminder and an opportunity to talk about Jesus.

It's the small things that we do that keep our focus where it should be because I am often reminded that it only takes one generation to forget the meaning of Christmas. One generation of parents not handing down to their children what it is that we are actually celebrating on Christmas, the birth of our Messiah, and I refuse to let that happen on our watch. I will not let us forget what we celebrate on Christmas.

You know I've talked about this over the last few weeks and months, but with everything that's going on in our world, with the wars that are taking place and politics and even things within our own country. I often talk with some of you and people in our community, and so many people are distraught and ask the questions, "What are we supposed to do? What is happening in the world in which we live?" And I feel that we all too quickly forget that we've already won the victory.

Jesus has already won regardless of what happens, regardless of the morals and ethics that are going to fall and the decisions that people are going to make. I know that we're heartbroken when it's not just the politicians, but they present opportunities for morals and ethics to be torn down in our country, and it's put to a vote. And we are the ones that vote in some of these immoral activities. And we say, "What is our world coming to you? What are we supposed to do?" We are supposed to put our faith in Jesus.

He is the one that conquers. He has already won the victory. He has already conquered sin and death. We should continue to point people to Him as we speak about the truth. And what a great opportunity we have during Christmas to point people back to our Savior as we are called, "Oh, come all ye faithful." Let me close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, I thank you once again for the opportunity to read the story, the story of you sending your son Jesus in the form of a baby with the intended purpose of dying on the cross for my sins. Lord, may we be reminded that this is not a fairy tale. It's not some story that was written or made up. It is the truth of history. It's the truth of the world in which we live.

May we have the faith of those early shepherds as they received the good news. Father, would we also receive the good news and share it with everyone who would listen? May we sing, "Oh, come, let us adore Him." He is Christ. He is the Messiah. He is the Lord. May people come to know you.

We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.