

Songs of Christmas Series

Part 1 – O Holy Night

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Good morning! For those of you who have been waiting, we made it! The Christmas season is here! Christmas means different things to many of us. For some it means family, traveling, food, and presents. But if you're a Christian this morning it means so much more.

Christmas mark the arrival of our savior Jesus. It's a time of reflection and gratitude toward our father because God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that whoever believes in him would not perish but have everlasting life.

I'm excited this morning to launch into a brand-new series Called Songs of Christmas. As a community of faith, we are so aware that each of us have been commissioned by God to "tell the story". We each do this in different ways. One of the ways the church has told the story of Jesus and particularly during the Christmas season is through music. The church has produced some of the most incredible arrangements of lyrics and music to tell the story of our faith. These songs have become so important to us they are so rich in theology and many of them saturated in scripture we thought it would be helpful to us as a church community to take some time to look at some of these songs. Not only to speak to our hearts as we meet together today and the remaining Sundays until Christmas but maybe as you do some shopping or listen to the radio over the next few weeks. You might find yourself listening to one of the famous carols and hymns that we will talk about and it is our hope that this series will draw you closer to Jesus and assist you in worshiping him in a more meaningful way.

The first carol we are going to look at is one of the most popular carols in the church "O Holy Night." Some interesting history about the song.

Catholic Priest wanted a new Christmas Song for Christmas. In this small town there was a great French poet Placide Cappeau, a non-believer. The priest asked him anyway to write a poem to tell the story of Luke chapter 2. He then, asked a musician to compose the music for the poem, not a believer. The song began to spread and then word got out that a non-Christian wrote the song. It was too late. In 1906 this song was the first song ever broadcasted over am radio played on a violin.

Christmas Eve 1906 Reginald Fessenden, Fessenden reported that, on the evening of December 24, 1906 ([Christmas Eve](#)), phonograph record, followed by his playing the violin and singing, and closing with a bible reading.

I asked my good friend Danny Gokey if he would be willing to cover the song for us so he throws this arrangement together. Let's listen together to this great carol *O Holy Night*.

Play Video

Stand for the reading of God word

Read (Luke 2:1-22)

*O holy night, the stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth;
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
'Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world-rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;*

1. Jesus enters into our darkest places

Darkness represents several things in scripture. It represents our spiritual condition outside of knowing Jesus as savior. Wickedness, judgment, death. Darkness also represents hiding particularly our shame or sin from others or from God.

John 3:19-20

19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

I don't think that it's by accident that Jesus was born at night. I think it was very intentional. The writer of O Holy Night makes it the primary illustrative theme of the first verse of the song.

The first verse of this song starts with night and ends with the morning. It starts with darkness and ends with light.

It begins with a world long lying in sin and error carrying the weight of sin and the worthlessness of unrighteousness and ends with a world full of the worth and value free from shame and fear adopted into the family of God with a new name and new value.

It begins with a world that is weary and without hope. And ends with a world that is full of hope and rejoicing.

Why? Because he came into our darkest places, our deepest pain and our greatest need and he shines his life and light into every corner of our souls and one day the world.

I think one of the reasons we love this song so much is really the night part. We can all relate to reality of the darkness within us. Certainly before I met Jesus but even now the times when I am just so aware of my sin, my failure, my secrets, my fallenness.

The writer of the carol is emphasizing that Jesus came to this world at night, into a dark physical environment, and in the same way he comes to us to our dark spiritual environment the darkest places of our hearts and bring life and light.

Isaiah 9

2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the greatness of his government and peace

there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

As we tell the story this Christmas season let's not forget to tell the world that God is a God that brings light to our darkest places. We all, whether you are a Christian or not, carry with us the heavy load of shame and regret. You can pretend that you don't, people will pretend that they don't. But we do.

The number one way we get to tell people about how God enters into the darkest places of our lives isn't by pointing out someone else's failure or sin pattern or the darkness in their life and telling them Jesus can fix that. You should invite him in.

1 Peter 2:9

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

The best way this Christmas season to tell the story of Jesus coming into the darkest places of your life is at the right time and in the right moment sharing with someone your story.

I've always been fascinated how a conversation can so abruptly shift the moment one person vulnerably shares.

Maybe this Christmas you might make a goal to be open with someone at the right time in the right moment and tell them the story of how God met you in your darkest place.

I love another line in this song

He knows our need, To our weakness no stranger!

2. Jesus enters into this world with grace and peace.

(Story about losing my wedding ring)

Tracy knew what I needed in that moment. We are so used to people being offended, disappointed, or judgmental in response to our need and our weakness that we rarely find anyone that we feel like we can be open with about them.

I have been blessed to have mentors and leaders in my life that were able to hear my confessions over the years and they were able to respond with grace.

Hebrews 4:15-16

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

(story about my dad and I driving to Florida 90 mph)

Opening the door to Jesus or even a person to see the darkest place of our lives can be terrifying. Unless you know their character, what they are like and how they will respond.

While it can still be difficult knowing that Jesus came to this earth, lived a human life, knows what it's like to walk in human shoes. That he came to bring grace and peace and forgiveness. He came to heal and restore. It changes the way we approach him.

Let us approach his throne of grace with confidence.

This Christmas season we get to tell the story that Jesus enters into this world with grace and peace.

The best way for you to do that probably isn't in walking up to complete strangers and telling them I know you are really sinful but Jesus entered the world with grace and peace.

The best way to tell the story is in the way you respond to the people close to you when they fail or let you down. When the people around you fail or make mistakes when they approach you, are you sitting on a throne of grace or judgment? I guess I'm thinking of my children or maybe an employee. Can they come to you confidently even in their failure because they know they will find mercy and grace and help?

That's why Jesus entered the world and that's how he responds to us when we come to him. I think the best way to tell people that part of the story is to respond to people the same way Jesus does.

The final line I'd like to look at in the great carol.

*Sweet hymns of joy in grateful Chorus raise we;
Let all within us praise his Holy name!*

3. Jesus enters our everyday lives that we might find joy in him and praise his name.

End service with O Holy Night