

Christmas Carols – Go Tell it on the Mountain

Hey, welcome once again to the Journey Church, New York City. I'm Kerrick and I wanna thank you for joining me today as we kick off our brand new teaching series called Christmas Carols. And so if you haven't yet, go ahead and click the button beside the livestream player, download your message notes so you can follow along during the service today.

Now, I know it's hard to believe, but the Christmas season has officially begun. All, all of the Christmas decorations and lights are going up. People are putting up their Christmas trees. You walk into any store and they're playing Christmas music right now. And so today as we begin this new teaching series called Christmas Carols, I thought it'd be fun to test you on your knowledge.

Of some popular Christmas songs. I'm calling this name that Christmas song. And so what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna, I'm gonna read out some phrases from some lines from some popular Christmas songs, and I wanna see if you can name that Christmas song. Some of 'em are gonna be easy, but some of them they test your knowledge just a little bit.

So let's start here. I'm gonna name the, I'm gonna read a a Line from a Christmas song, and you name that Christmas song. Are you ready? Here we go. Here's the first one. Was a jolly happy soul with a corn cob pipe and a buttoned nose. All right. That one should be easy if you're, if you're with someone, so you can name it first.

That one should be easy. That's Frosty the snowman. All right. How about this one? Hey, this was a little bit more difficult. I wouldn't have gotten this one. You will get a sentimental feeling when you hear the voices singing. You'll get a sentimental feeling when you hear the voices singing. Now, if I could actually sing that to the tune, you'd probably know what it is.

It's rocking around. The Christmas tree. How are you doing so far? All right, here's a third one. Now, you'll recognize this next phrase, but the challenge is, do you know the title of the song? Here it is. Chest Nuts, roasting On An Open Fire. Yeah,

that's my, my singing. Do you, you, you've heard that before, but do you know the title?

If you said the Christmas song, you were right. It's called The Christmas Song. How about this one? I'm gonna throw you an easy one right here, and if you ever saw it, You would even say it glows. Now, of course, that's Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer. Okay, one more. Let's see if you can get this final one.

Bells are ringing children. Singing All is Mary and Bright. You may have to sing the rest of the phrase before you get it, but that one, our final one is, here Comes Santa Claus. How did you do? How did you do in this name that Christmas song? Well, listen. Those are songs that make us think of Christmas.

They make us think of Santa and reindeer and presents in in Christmas trees. And for many of us, those songs bring back great memories and that's, that's great. But the original music of Christmas, the songs that that we know is the Christmas carols, well, they're about more than just tradition and nostalgia.

Christmas carols were written to tell the world the most important story of all. The real story of Christmas, how God sent his only son Jesus into our world that first Christmas to bring hope in salvation to a lost and broken world. That's the good news of Christmas, and that's the same good news that the angels announced to the shepherds on the very first Christmas, almost 2000 years ago.

And in fact, let's begin by looking at the beginning of that story. This is from Luke chapter two, beginning in in verse 10. The angels are talking to the shepherds in the fields that first Christmas night, and look at what they say. I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior.

Yes, the Messiah. The Lord has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David. You see, Christmas carols are all about announcing and celebrating the birth of Jesus. And that's actually what the word Carol means. It means a song of praise, a song of joy. And while they may bring back some of our favorite Christmas memories when we sing the Christmas carols, the carols were written to help us understand important theological truths about Jesus.

They're, they were written to help us understand why Jesus came to earth that first Christmas. And so during this series, we're gonna explore the good news through some of our favorite Christmas carols, and we're also gonna look at the story behind how some of those carols were actually written. It's gonna be a lot of fun.

Next Sunday, we're gonna look at a little town of Bethlehem and how God oftentimes chooses to accomplish really big things. Using seemingly insignificant people or places. I love how God does that. That's next week. And then in the coming weeks, we're gonna look at the Carol Hart. The Harold Angels sing, and then I heard the bells on Christmas Day.

And then listen, we're gonna wrap up this series with Silent Night, and that's gonna be our special Christmas Eve service. But today, We kick off Christmas carols with one of my favorite carols a a carol. That reminds us that the good news that the angels proclaim that first Christmas is for everyone.

And this carol is called Go tell it on the mountain. Go tell it on the mountain. And in fact, in a moment, I've asked our worship team to come and they're gonna lead us in singing this Christmas Carol together. But before they do, go tell it. On the mountain is a Negro spiritual song, dating back to at least 1865.

It was compiled by John Wesley work Jr. That he was the son of a church choir director, and he was the first African-American collector of these spirituals of these special songs. Now, the task of collecting this song was difficult because spirituals for the most part in the African American. Tradition, especially the slave tradition.

They weren't written down. They were passed down orally from tradition, from generation to generation. But Work JR. Realized the majesty and the haunting beauty of this Carol. And so he wrote it down and he decided to publish it. The original singers of the song accomplished the same task that the angels gave the shepherds that first Christmas night outside of Bethlehem.

They were proclaiming that Jesus is born. And the, and they were also sharing the hope that comes with it. And now we're going to join that tradition as well by singing. Go tell it on the mountain. So wherever you're joining is for church online. I hope that you will sing the song with us. Then, even if you don't sing, pay attention to the words and let them sink in.

Then I'm gonna be back to teach the message on go tell it on the mountain, but let's sing it together right now.

While shepherds kept their watching
O'er silent flocks by night
Behold throughout the heavens
There shone a Holy light

Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born

The shepherds feared and trembled
When, lo! Above the Earth
Rang out the angel chorus
That hailed our Savior's birth

Down in a lowly manger
Our humble Christ was born
And brought us all salvation
That blessed Christmas morn

Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born

I was a lonely seeker
I sought both night and day
And I asked the Lord to help me
And He showed me the way

He made me a watchman
Upon the city wall
And If I am a Christian
I am the least of all

Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born
That Jesus Christ is born

So go tell it on the mountain. Tells the story of the shepherd's life-changing encounter with the angels that first Christmas night. Then how, because of what they experience, they had to tell everyone. They, they felt like people had to know this good news and so they went out and shared it. But go tell it on the mountain isn't just the shepherd song.

It's our song too. You see, it's a reminder that while many people celebrate the stuff of Christmas, they may not know the Savior of Christmas. But the good news is this time of year people are more open spiritually to hear the good news of Jesus. They're more open spiritually to what God might have for them than almost any other time of the year.

And just like those shepherds 2000 years ago, God is sending us out to tell the good news of what Jesus has done in our lives. In fact, I want you to read our memory verse for today out, out loud with me. This is from Isaiah chapter 52, verse seven. So wherever you're joining us for church online, I want you to read this out loud with me, beginning with how beautiful are you?

Ready? Go. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger? Who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation? The news that the God of Israel reigns. I love that. The good news and salvation that was announced that first Christmas. Is still available to you and me and to the entire world today.

The same God who brought peace in salvation, that blessed Christmas morn is still bringing peace and salvation to our lives today. And he's looking to you and me to share that good news, but how? You know, in a world that's increasingly secular and sometimes even hostile to Jesus, how do we step out to share the real hope of Christmas?

That's what we're gonna look at today, how to follow the shepherd's example and share the good news of Jesus this Christmas. And so let's look at that. If you, if you've got your notes, you can take notes as we go through. How to go tell the good news of Jesus. How do we go tell the good news of Jesus?

Well, here's the first step. The first step is, thank God that the good news of Jesus is for everyone. Write that down. Thank God that the good news of Jesus is for everyone. Now, I want you to think about this. If you wanted to announce the birth of Jesus, the birth of the Savior, the Messiah to the world, the good news that Jesus has come to save us from our sins, you would never in a million years decide to start telling that news.

With a group of ordinary shepherds. That's what's so fascinating about this first Christmas, because the shepherds are the most unlikely group of party guests imaginable. Yet they were the first ones to hear about Jesus's birth. We pick up the story going back to Luke chapter two, but this time starting in verse eight.

It says that night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, just outside of Bethlehem guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. In other words, God lit up the night sky. It would've been an incredible scene with an angel up in the heavens, and it says, They were afraid, and I would be afraid too.

They were. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. Don't be afraid. He said, I bring you good news. That will bring great joy to all the people. I want you to circle those two words, good news, and it's amazing to me that God would use shepherds to be the first ones to hear this good news. You'd think that if, if God wanted to get the word out, if he wanted it to seem important, that he might have started with the religious leaders.

He might have started with, with the political elites of, of the time, but that that's not who he chose. God sent his message to a bunch of average ordinary guys. We, we don't even know their names. They, they weren't spiritual giants. And, and, and, and sometimes, you know, shepherds were sort of on the margins of society.

They were sort of the social outcasts. In fact, shepherds as a group were known for being so untrustworthy in those days that their testimony wasn't acceptable in a court of law. So why would God choose shepherds? Why would he choose sweaty, smelly, societal outcast to tell the world that God has come to earth?

You know why I believe he, he chose the shepherds because I believe that God wanted to show that this good news, it wasn't just for the religious people, it wasn't just for the powerful or the rich, that this good news was for the entire world. It was for everyone. No matter who you are or what you've done, God loves you.

That's the good news that we can all be thankful for this Christmas that Jesus came for everyone. Listen, right now as you listen to me, you, you may feel like. A failure. A failure is a person, a failure. As a parent, you may feel like you've been a failure in your business or in your marriage, or even in your finances.

You may have a reputation for making really bad choices. You may feel that you don't deserve God's love and forgiveness, and you know what? You'll be right. None of us deserve the love and forgiveness that God has shown to us. Sin has made failures of us all, but thank God. That his love isn't based on the good things that we do.

It's based on the amazing thing, on the amazing thing that Jesus did when he stepped out of heaven and he came to earth and he lived the perfect life, and then he gave his life for us on the cross. He died for our sins so that we can have a right relationship with God. It's not based on the good things we do is based on the incredible thing that Jesus did.

John three 16 in your notes. Look at, look at what it says. Jesus says this for, this is how God loved the world. Now, underlying those two words, the world, in other words, it's the entire world. He's talking to everyone here. So, God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, so that everyone who believes in him, again, under underlying that phrase, everyone who believes in him, talking about everyone, everyone who believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life.

See, the good news of Christmas is for you, but it's not just for you. It's for the entire world. It's for everyone. And the greatest act of thankfulness for what God has done for you is to also tell others what God can do for them too. You know, the shepherds remind us that God's love, his forgiveness, his purpose, his peace is for everyone who believes.

And so how does God want to use you to help others experience that love this Christmas? Well, that's next. In your notes, I want you to write this down. The second way to go tell the good news of Jesus. Be prepared to share the good news of Jesus with those around me. Write that down. Be prepared to share the good news of Jesus with those around me.

Now listen, when the shepherds heard this good news about Jesus, they couldn't, they couldn't keep it to themselves, and so they started sharing it with, with everyone around them. Look at what it says in Luke chapter two, beginning in verse 15. It says, when the angels had returned, To heaven. The shepherds said to each other, they just heard this announcement.

They said to each other, let's go to Bethlehem. Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has, has told us about. And so the, the angels announced, Hey, Jesus has been born in Bethlehem. They said, let's go find him. Let's go see what's going on. Then it says, after seeing him, after seeing Jesus, the

shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child, all who heard the shepherd story.

We're astonished. Now, a couple of things I want you to notice here. First of all, I want you to underline that phrase. Let's go to Bethlehem. Underline. Let's go to Bethlehem. Understand Bethlehem was a shepherd's hometown, so the shepherds didn't have to go far to, to see what all this was about. They didn't have to go far to, to, to tell people about what they had just seen.

It'd be like me telling you, Hey, let's go to the east side to see what's going on. You know, it's like going across town is what they did. It was close. And so the shepherds go to Bethlehem and they find Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and in that moment, Their lives were changed forever. When they encountered Jesus, their lives were changed forever.

How do we know this? We'll go back up to our passage. I want you to underline the phrase the shepherds told everyone. They saw Jesus and what did they do next? It says, the shepherds told everyone. Remember, the shepherds aren't the most popular people in town, but because of their experience with Jesus, they couldn't keep it in.

They didn't hide where they'd been. They started telling everyone around them about what they had seen. Now you might say the kerick. I, I'm too afraid to tell everyone around me about Jesus. You know what, what if it makes things weird for me at work or at school? What, what if it makes things uncomfortable for me with my family?

Or maybe you wanna tell others about what Jesus has done for you, but you just don't know how. I mean, you're afraid you don't have the right words. You're afraid that maybe you're gonna blow it if you try to talk about your faith with someone. But I want you to remember the good news about Jesus is for everyone.

So the key to sharing it is just to be ready. First Peter three 15. Look in your notes at what it says. It says. And if somebody asks you about your hope as a believer, the underlying this phrase, always be ready to explain it. Always be ready to

explain it. So how do you prepare to share the good news about Jesus with those around you?

Well, let me just give you a couple of easy ways, a couple of important ways that you can begin doing that this Christmas. And you can share your faith. First of all, invite a friend, invite a family member to come with you to our Christmas carol's teaching series. I think this is a great time of the year to invite someone to come to church with you.

You know it's not hard today. If you came to one of our in-person services, we gave you an invite card that, that, that looks like this. But you don't need an invite card. You know, all you gotta do is. Go up to somebody that maybe you've been praying for, maybe a good friend or a family member or a coworker, and just tell them, Hey, listen, it's Christmas time and our church is doing this fun teaching series on the Christmas carols.

We're singing a lot of the carols, and if you come with me you'll have a good time. And, and by the way, we meet in a movie theater so we can just go out and see a movie after we go to church on Sunday. You know, tell them that we've got coffee and donuts. You know, tell them that all, and by the way, you can invite them to come with you because all the messages in this teaching series are perfect for those looking to draw closer to God this Christmas.

They, they're gonna hear a clear message and it's gonna help them draw closer to God. Another way to go tell it on the mountain is a little more personal. Pray and ask God to open the door to a personal conversation with someone in your life who doesn't know Jesus. And, and you can share what Jesus has done in your own life.

I mean, just like the shepherds, if you're a follower of Jesus, you've got a story to tell. Now, it, it doesn't have to be dramatic. It doesn't have to include angels singing in the sky, but God has worked a miracle in your life. He has, he's worked a miracle in your own life. He's saved you and he forgave you of your sins.

He gave you a new path to walk on. He gave you a purpose for your life, and so you can share with someone you care about. What Jesus has done in your life, and I promise you, I promise you, there are plenty of people in your life who are open to hearing that story about what God has done in your life because they care about you and it's your story and nobody can argue with it.

However you choose to tell those around you. Here's why. Sharing the good news of Jesus this Christmas is so important. Second Peter, chapter three, verse nine. It says, the Lord isn't really being slow about his promise as some people think. No, he's being patient. For your sake, why is God being patient?

Look at this last phrase, underline this last phrase. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. You know, all across our city, over the next four weeks, they're gonna be people excitedly celebrating Christmas, pretending that all is Maryam bright while all along there is an incredible emptiness in their life.

They know that there's something missing even as they celebrate Christmas. The truth is, they're missing the real joy of Christmas because they don't know the savior. Of Christmas, they've got the stuff of Christmas. They just don't have the Savior of Christmas, and they're missing the real life that Jesus was born to bring into this world.

And they're on a path to miss heaven. Don't miss this. God wants everyone, everyone to be saved. And like the shepherds this Christmas, we have the privilege of pointing the people around us to Jesus. But let me ask you this. What about the people who aren't around us? What about the people who live far away in places that we can't go?

Well, that's the next step in your notes to go telling to, to us, going to tell the good news of Jesus in your notes. Here's the third step. Send the good news of Jesus where I cannot go write that in, send the good news of Jesus where I cannot go. You know, to me, what's so amazing? About the shepherd story is that these were poor, uneducated men who probably in all likelihood had never traveled more than 30 miles away from their hometown of Bethlehem, from from their fields.

They probably had not wondered very far. Yeah, because of their experience with Jesus and the way they shared the good news, their story, the Shepherd's story has gone out all over the world. In fact, we're still talking about it today, and it's not just a journey Church for their churches all around the world.

Still talking about the shepherds today. Why? Because they didn't keep the good news to themselves. They went to tell it on the mountain. Remember, the good news of Jesus is for everyone, and God wants it to go out to everyone all around the world, even in places where you can't go. In Mark chapter 16, verse 15, I want you to look at the words of Jesus.

In fact, I want you to read this out loud with me, beginning with go. Are you ready? And go. Go into the world and preach the good news to everyone. Jesus says, go into the world and preach the good news. To who? To everyone. Listen, you may feel probably like the shepherds felt that you can't go far, that there's no way you can go into all the world.

But listen, even if you can't physically go to all the world, you can help send people who can, you know. Every year through our special offerings, we support missionaries, meeting the needs, sharing Jesus and starting churches all over the world. And this year when you give to the next initiative, that's our new initiative to secure the future of the Journey Church, to double the impact of our church over the next 20 years, and to hopefully secure a permanent meeting location in Ministry Center right here in the heart of New York City.

But when you get to the next initiative, a portion of that will go to support over 6,500 missionaries who are sharing the good news of Jesus. In places around the world that you and I probably will never go in a portion of that next initiative that's given this year will go to Support Hope Schools in East London, South Africa, a Christian school educating and meeting the spiritual and physical needs of impoverished children who live in that community.

And then a portion of the next initiative will go to support the work of the Moscow Evangelical Christian Seminary in Russia that is training pastors to start

new churches in all the nations of the former Soviet Union, including Russia and Ukraine and Belarus and others. And listen, when we pray for and we give to support missions like this, we are taking the gospel all around the world.

We're part of that. And in the summer of 2023, By the way, if you want to go on a mission trip in the summer of 2023, you'll have the opportunity to go to South Africa and serve the children I was talking about at Hope Schools. And if you want more information on how you can be a part of that mission trip, just check that next step on your connection card and we'll send you information on that South African mission trip this week.

You know, when I think of this, I think of the church in Philippi. That supported the work of the Apostle Paul, his missionary work. Paul writes this in Philippians chapter one, beginning in verse three. He says, talking to the church in Philippi. He says, every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God.

Whenever I pray, I make request for all of you with joy. Get this for you, have been my partners in spreading the good news about Christ from the, from the time you first heard it until now. You see most of the Christians in Philippine, most of the believers, they couldn't go with Paul on his missionary journeys.

But do you know what they could do? They could pray for him, they could encourage him, they could support his missions financially as he went, and as a result, they had a part in every person that came to faith in Jesus through Paul. In every church he started, they were a part of it. See, when you support missions, here's what I believe.

One day when you get to heaven, it could happen that a complete stranger comes up to you, someone that you've never met from a place that you've never been, and they say to you in heaven, they say, I'm in heaven today because of the missionaries you helped send to my home. I have eternal life in heaven.

Because you gave, because you sent them. Thank you for giving to the Lord. Let me tell you. There's no greater news to celebrate this Christmas than people coming to know Jesus. And so thank God that the good news is for everyone.

Share the good news with those that you know. Send the good news to those who live in places where you can't go.

And then finally, write this in your notes. Celebrate the good news of Jesus this Christmas. The final step to telling the good news of Jesus. Celebrate the good news of Jesus this Christmas. The song we're looking at, the carol we're looking at today is go tell it on the mountain. But you know, you don't need a mountain to go tell people about Jesus.

You see, the Carol in the mountain was just a way to tell as many people as possible about Jesus. You, you tell it from the mountaintop, so as many people as possible can hear, you know, today we have different tools. We have the invite cards that, that I'm telling you about that you can give to people. We have social media that you can use to invite people to church.

You can send a text, you can bring someone with you to church. You know, you can support missionaries who are taking the good news of Jesus to the ends of the earth. The question is, will you do it this Christmas? Will you do something this Christmas? I hope so. I hope you don't wait. You don't put it off.

I hope you don't say, well, I'm, I'm too busy. Do it this Christmas. You know why? Because Christmas provides a unique opportunity where people are more spiritually open than perhaps any other time of the year. You just have to decide to do it. Decide to share the good news of Jesus this Christmas. You know, when you read the Shepherd story, After all the excitement of the angels, after the shepherds, getting to meet the newborn Jesus and telling everyone what they had seen.

I want you to see how their story closes in Luke chapter two. This is Luke chapter two, verse 20. It says, the shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and sing. You know what drove the shepherds to share the good news with others? It was gratitude. They, they were thankful for what God had done in their lives for what God had allowed them to see.

They didn't deserve it, but God in his love brought them to Jesus. Listen, if you're a follower of Jesus, if you're a believer here today, God has done the same thing for you. You didn't deserve it. You might not have even been looking for it when you met Jesus for the first time, but God in his love, Brought someone into your life who helped point you to Jesus at just the right time.

And right now, God is calling you to be that person for someone else. Will you do that? To be the one who points into Jesus this Christmas? Now again, you may be thinking, Kerrick, I, I'm not good at this. I don't have the answers. I'm not good at conversations like this. But listen, neither were the shepherds.

They were the mo. They were the most unlikely people to do this. They didn't have theological training. They weren't eloquent. In fact, they were social outcasts. No one really wanted to hear from them or be around them. But God chose them to share the good news, and they did. And the world has never been the same since.

And God wants to do that through you this Christmas. You know, every Sunday as a church, we meet in person in Times Square at the AMC Empire 25 Theater, 11:00 AM every Sunday. And if you were to look at a map and you were to put a thumb tack right in Times Square, right where we meet for services, and then you were to draw a circle with a 50 mile radius, Did you know that 24 million people live inside of that circle?

24 million people, and studies show that 87% of those 24 million people are living without the hope of Jesus in your life right now, they are friends, they're family members and coworkers and classmates and neighbors who are living without the hope of Jesus. And if we don't go tell it on the mountain in our homes, at work, at school, and everywhere, then who will go?

Our final verse comes from Romans chapter 10, verses 13 and 14. I want you to read this out loud with me, beginning with everyone. Are you ready? Beginning with everyone. Read this out loud with me. Are you ready? Go. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, but how can they call on him to save them?

Unless they believe in him, and how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? How can the people in your life hear the good news about Jesus? If you don't tell them? Would you bow your heads with with me right now and let's go to God in prayer?

If you would bow your head, close your eyes. Let this be a time between you and God, and let's talk to him in prayer. Heavenly Father, thank you for the good news of Jesus this Christmas. Thank you that Christ the Savior, was born to bring hope and light and life to us. Thank you that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and through that forgiveness, we receive eternal life in heaven.

God, this Christmas, may we be thankful that your grace has come to us, and may we be committed to taking the good news of Jesus. To those around us. Now, here's what I want you to do as we pray. Heads bow, eyes closed. As we pray, I want you to think of someone in your life who doesn't know Jesus. It could be a family member, a friend, a coworker, a classmate.

I want you to think of someone who doesn't know Jesus, and I want you to pray this prayer for them. Would you do that right now? Heads bound, ice closed. Pray this. Pray this prayer. God. Right now I pray for, and then you fill in the blank. God, I pray for this person. Please create a divine appointment for me to share with them about Jesus this Christmas.

Help me to invite them to church and to share with them what you have done for me. I want them to be in heaven as we pray. For some of you, as I've talked about coming to Jesus, you realize that you've never come to him. You've never began a relationship with him. And if that's you, then you're ready to step across the line and get right with God and become a follower of Jesus.

Pray this simple prayer with me right now. As I pray it out loud, I want you to pray it in your heart. Jesus, thank you for coming that first Christmas. Thank you for loving me and dying for my sins on the cross. I know I'm a sinner, and so today I invite you to come into my life. Forgive me of my sins. I wanna follow you from

this day forward in the fellowship of your church. We pray this in Jesus' name.
Amen.