

Christmas Carols - Silent Night

Hey, Merry Christmas and welcome once again to our Special Journey, Christmas Online service. I'm Kean. I wanna thank you for, uh, joining me today as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And as we wrap up what's been a really. Powerful teaching series for us here at The Journey called Christmas Carols.

Now, if you haven't yet, and if you're on our website, you can click the button beside the livestream player. You can download your message notes. You can use those to follow along during, uh, today's message. I hope you will do that. Now, listen, A few years ago, time Magazine released a study of the most popular Christmas songs of all time.

And, and what they did is they looked at how many times each of these Christmas songs counting, uh, secular Christmas songs and religious Christmas songs, how many times they had been recorded by other artists over the last 30 years. And then they ranked these songs based on how many times they had been, uh, recorded.

Now, if you had to guess, what would you say? Is the most popular Christmas song, the song that's been recorded more than any other. If you guessed Rudolph, the Red Nose Reindeer, or Feliz Navidad, you would be incorrect. The most popular Christmas song over the last 30 years is the Christmas Carol that we're gonna look at today.

Silent Night. In fact, Silent Night has been recorded over 700 times by different artists over the last 30 years. That's twice as much as the next closest Christmas song, which happens to also be a religious song, Joy to the World. Now, we're gonna sing this beautiful Christmas Carol Silent Night at the end of our, at the end of our service today.

So I hope you'll hang out with us and, and be a part of, of that at the end. But first, How did this simple little Christmas Carol become the song that we sing most

often at Christmas? Well, silent Night was written by an Austrian, uh, priest named Joseph Moore. And, and Moore wrote a poem. He pinned the words to the poem, still a knocked, which is German for silent night, and he wrote it in 1816 in the days just following the Napoleonic Wars.

Now understand those wars that conflict caused devastation across large parts of Europe. So famine and. Poverty and disease was, was rampant. It was a dark time. It was a tough time. It was a time when there wasn't a lot of hope. So it was during this time of pessimism and despair that more pin the words to this little poem, this heartfelt poem about Christmas, a poem about hope and peace in a dark time.

And his poem would later, later be set to music so that it could be song at Christmas. Now the world in 1816, really it wasn't so much different than our world today. It was a world filled with war and conflict in, in violence and anger and hatred. In fact, it wasn't so much unlike the world that Jesus was born into on that first Christmas.

In fact, our Carol May be called Silent night, but if you read the Christmas story, you realize. It wasn't really a very silent night, that first Christmas. I mean, anyone, if you've ever been in, in, in a room for the birth of a baby, uh, you know that it's not silent. It's confusing. Yes. Exciting, hectic. Maybe a little bit scary, but silent.

Yeah, not so much. And Bethlehem. That night was not a silent little town. It was a town busting at the seams because so many people had traveled to, to Bethlehem that first Christmas because the Roman Empire had required a census. All the Israelites had to go back to their, to their native hometown. And so, uh, Bethlehem was busting at the seams with people.

It was so crowded that there wasn't any room in any of the ins in town for Mary and Joseph. And so Jesus was born in a dirty, stable, with a bunch of smelly, noisy animals. There were angels singing in the skies. There were uninvited shepherds that showed up as as guests in the middle of the night, and there was a crying baby.

Th this is the, this is what I want you to see. The night that Jesus was born was anything but a silent night. It wasn't silent. The truth is, Jesus was born into the messiness and into the confusion of our world. And it was a world of violence and oppression. Israel at that time, was under the thumb of the authoritarian Roman government.

The people were running out of hope. They were, they were praying for, they were looking for a messiah that might come and save them. Fast forward to today. Maybe right now, your life feels noisy. It feels messy. It feels out of control. And broken. Maybe right now because of whatever's going on in your life, you feel forgotten and alone.

The message this Christmas is that God sees you. He sees what you are going through in the mess that you're in, and he loves you and he's with you. And if you will trust him, he can bring peace and hope to the noise and to the messiness of your world. And see the Carol Silent Night. It wasn't written claiming that the night that Jesus was born, born was calm and all was bright because it most certainly wasn't.

The song is pointing to something much bigger that in the birth of Jesus, God becoming man is stepping into our world. That first Christmas in that moment is God bringing hope and peace and light into our dark and broken world. I, I don't know about you, but that sounds like it's worth singing about, and that's what I wanna share with you today.

I wanna talk to you about how Jesus can bring silent Night into your life today. How he can bring peace and hope into a, a, a hectic, chaotic, broken life. And, and I hope you get, uh, receive hope and peace from tonight's message. So look in your, your notes. Now. Jesus can bring silent night into my life this Christmas.

Here's the first way. Write this in. Jesus brings hope to my dark days. Jesus brings hope to my dark days. You know, one of the things that's, that's fascinating to me is that at least here in the, in the northern hemisphere, um, Christmas comes during the darkest, uh, time of the year. December 21st is the winter solstice.

It's the shortest and darkest day of the entire year, and that's when Christmas comes, when it's most dark, it's during the darkest season of the year that Christians celebrate God's light entering the world. Now, why is that important? Because the Bible tells us that no matter who you are, there are going to be dark days in your life.

In fact, look at our, uh, next verse, the Ecclesiastes chapter 11, verse eight. It says this, it says, let people rejoice in every day of life. But let them also remember, there will be many dark days, rejoice in life. But remember, there are going to be dark days in your life. In your life. You're gonna go through dark days.

They're inevitable, they're gonna be dark days of confusion when when you're not sure which way to turn, there're gonna be dark. Days of conflict when it feels like you're constantly fighting with the different people in your life. They're gonna be dark days of disappointment where things don't turn out the way that you wanted them to.

There're gonna be dark days of loss and loneliness and grief, dark days of stress, anxiety and fear. Dark days of heartache and despair. Life is full of dark days. And listen, when you're facing dark days, what you need more than anything. Is the light of hope. You need hope. And so where do you find hope in your darkest days?

Well, Jesus gives us the answer in John chapter 12, verse 46. Look at this next verse. In fact, wherever you're joining us for church online, I want you to read this verse out loud with us with a lot of Christmas spirit and excitement. So read this out loud with me, John, chapter 12 verse 46. Are you ready?

Go. I have come as a light to shine in this dark world so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark. That's the words of Jesus. I have come as a light to shine in this dark world so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark. If you're taking notes, underline that phrase, all who put their trust in me, all who put their trust in me.

You see the hope that you need for the dark days of life. It's found in Jesus. It comes when you're able to trust Jesus with all the circumstances of your life. You see, the problem with dark days is when it's dark, it's hard to know which way to go. It's, it's hard to know how to move forward. I mean, when you don't know what to do or where to go when you can't see the way, that's a hopeless feeling.

That's a scary feeling. That's one of my least favorite things about this time of year. When the nights are long and the days are shorter. You know what, what's depressing to me is, is, is because when I leave work at the end of the day, it's already dark outside. It, it's, it's pitch black and I have to go home in the dark.

And I don't know about you, but that's always a little depressing to me. Right. And it's also a little bit scarier when you're walking home in the dark. But you know, thankfully in, in New York City, we have lights everywhere. It's never completely dark. There are street lights everywhere. There are car lights, there's store lights, and, and the city is lit up even when it's dark.

But I want you to imagine for a moment, what if there were no lights in the city when you made your way home? No street lights, no store lights, no car lights, no lights from signs. But imagine walking home in complete darkness. That would be scary, wouldn't it? It'd be scary not to know what was the next step ahead.

Not knowing which way to go, not knowing who's out there in, in the dark. That sounds more like violent night, not silent night. It would be chaos. People lost and able to tell where they are, where they're going, how to get there. That would be scary. But here's what I want you to see. That's how most people in this world live their lives.

Moving through life aimlessly, moving through life, hopelessly always in the dark, untethered without a clear purpose or a clear direction. Walking along in the darkness with no guiding light, no hope of where they're going. Listen, if that's where you find yourself this Christmas, In the dark days of waiting and wanting and wondering, waiting for your health to be restored, wanting to finally meet that person that you could spend the rest of your life with.

Wondering if, if, if you, if a better job or a better income will finally come this year. I say, I don't know what hopeless situation you're facing right now, but I do know that Jesus promises if you will put your trust in him. There's always hope. Hope for a better future. Hope for healing and restoration.

Hope for forgiveness. An eternal life. Hope that God will make everything right. So this Christmas, I invite you to stop trying to get through the dark days on your own and trust Jesus to bring hope into your life. Now, here's the second way. Jesus can bring silent, uh, night into my life this Christmas. He brings hope, but also Jesus brings peace to my burden.

Heart. Write that in. Jesus brings peace to my, uh, burden heart. He brings hope to my dark days. And peace to my burdened heart. Now, the truth is our world is a world of heavy burdens. I mean, it seems like every day someone or something is trying to hand you another heavy weight that you've gotta carry around in life.

And as time passes, as we pick up more and more burdens, as we carry more and more weight around, it becomes heavier and heavier until at some point we just can't lift it on our own anymore. There's a burden of fear. You know, I, is there gonna be a recession? What if my health gets worse? Am am I gonna be able to make it through this, this difficult season of life?

The burden of fear. Then there's the burden of regret. Now, I wish I could go back and tell her that I loved her, but it, it's too late. I wish I could go back and make a different decision, but it's too late. The burden of regret. Then there's the burden of exhaustion. I, I have so much to do. I'm so tired, but I can't slow down.

I've gotta keep going. We're a burdened people. Lemme just say this. If that's you today and you're feeling burdened, you're feeling exhausted, I have good news for you. Jesus came to bring peace to your burdened heart. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah wrote these next words, we're gonna look at 600 years before the birth of Jesus.

Here's what he said, Isaiah chapter nine, verse six. He wrote the, this prophecy for a child is born to us. A son is given to us. The government will rest on his

shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, prince of Peace. Look at those titles. He says that, that Jesus is gonna be called Wonderful Counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, prince of Peace.

Those are wonderful names that have been given to Jesus here. Let's look at those. The first one, wonderful. Counselor, here's the thing, when your heart is burdened, You need a wonderful counselor who's going to hear you and understand you and, and give you wisdom for the road ahead. You need a wonderful counselor.

Then the second name was mighty God. Listen, when your heart is burdened, you need a mighty God who's willing to lift the weight of all these burdens, all these, these, these weights that you're carrying around in life and give you relief. You need a wonderful counselor. You need a mighty God, then Jesus' name is the everlasting Father.

Listen, when your heart is burdened, you need to know that God loves you. You need to know. That God's never go going to turn his back on you. That God doesn't get weak or tired, that there's no trial you're gonna face that's too big for him, and that he will never give up on you. You need to know that Jesus is your wonderful counselor, your mighty God, your everlasting father, and that I love this final name given to Jesus, prince of peace.

I love that prince of peace. When your heart is burdened, you need that peace that only Jesus can give you. You know it's true. The piece that Jesus offers isn't a piece that comes from the removal of difficulties in your life. Jesus doesn't promise He's gonna come in and remove everything that's hard in your life.

Rather, Jesus'. Peace is an unexplainable peace and presence in your life that God gives you in the middle of the difficulties. See, Jesus promises not that you'll live a burden free life. But that he will help you carry those burdens, that he will carry them for you. In Matthew 11:28, I want you to look again at the words of Jesus powerful words.

Jesus says this, come to me, all of you who are weary, and He and carry heavy burdens. Does that describe you? Any of you listening to me right now? Do you feel weary? Do you feel like you're carrying heavy burdens? Jesus says, come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you what rest.

Circle that word, rest. I will give you rest. I will give you peace. Listen, this Christmas, Jesus is inviting you to stop carrying all the baggage and all the the hurt by yourself. He invites you even in your exhaustion and anxiety to lay it all down at his feet and receive his peace and his rest. Listen, stop trying to live your life, trying to impress everybody else.

Stop trying to keep up the relentless pursuit in reckless pace of life and trust Jesus to give you peace. Remember I said earlier, it wasn't a silent night in Bethlehem. The night that Jesus was born, the town was filled with commotion. It was filled with overburdened, people hurrying about, and all of the while, the Son of God, the prince of peace, had entered their world, had come into their world that day to remove their burdens, to give them rest and relief, and they didn't even notice.

They were too busy. They were too distracted. They were too preoccupied to notice that the son of God had been born, had been born with the promise of peace. Let me tell you this, don't miss Jesus this Christmas. Slow down. Take time to experience him and allow him to bring peace to your burdened heart.

Jesus Silent night gives me hope to my dark days. It brings peace to my burden. Heart. And then finally in your notes, Jesus gives me a fresh start. Jesus gives me a fresh start. You know, as a pastor, I can't, I can't tell you how many times I've had people say to me, you know, Kerik, I. I need a fresh start or uou know, I've, I've messed things up so bad. I just, I wish I could go back and start all over and, and get, get a clean slate. I, I wish I could begin again. Have you ever thought that, you know, so many, so many of you are carrying the weight of guilt or shame or failure? Sure. You look successful. On the outside.

You look like you got it all together on the outside, but on the inside you're really hurting. You feel like you're falling apart. Is there a way to wipe the slate clean? Is

there a way to begin again? Well, that's exactly why Jesus came at Christmas to give you and to offer you a fresh start, you know, in his gospel.

The Apostle John has a very unique way of telling the Christmas story, a unique take on it. John chapter one, beginning in verse 10, I want you to look at, at how John talks about Christmas. Here's what he says. He, Jesus came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people and even they rejected him, but to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

They are, I want you to circle this next word, reborn. They are reborn, not with a physical birth, resulting from human passion or plan. But a birth that comes from God. I, I, I love this passage. Jesus came into our world to save us from our sin and to give us a fresh start, a fresh start in life, and a fresh start with God and a home in heaven.

We can be reborn. I love that. We can be reborn. We can start anew. But John mentions here that even the world, even Jesus' own people, they rejected him. You know, this is true in our world today, even as, even as we celebrate Christmas, even as all the Christmas lights go out, all around New York City, the vast majority of people in our city reject Jesus.

Yes, they're observing the holiday that celebrates his birth, but they don't accept who Jesus is. They don't accept why he came to Earth and what what he did for them. They've missed the real meaning of Christmas. And more importantly, they've missed a new life. They've missed the fresh start that Jesus offers them today.

But I also want you to notice what John wrote. He wrote this, he said, but to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn. You know, that's why Jesus was born, so that you could be reborn. Jesus was born on Christmas so that you could be reborn spiritually today.

So that you can experience God's love so that you can be forgiven, so that you can receive that fresh start that you so desperately need so that you can become a

child of God. You know, the truth is everyone is not a child of God. I know it's popular to say we're all children of God, but the Bible says that's just not true.

The truth is we're all created by God. The truth is we're all loved immensely by God, but we're not all children of God. Because the way you become a child of God is that you're adopted into his family. Through faith in Jesus, you receive a fresh start in life by believing and accepting Jesus as the savior and leader of your life.

And when you decide that I believe in Jesus, and I believe He is who he says he is, I believe he rose from the dead and I put my faith in him. The Bible says that I am reborn. I become a new person on the inside. I'm spiritually reborn. And I receive new life now. And eternal life forever. You know, one of my favorite lines in Silent Night.

Is this, it says, radiant beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace. Redeeming grace. What is redeeming grace? Well, it's the grace, it's the forgiveness, it's the love, it's the the undeserved acceptance. It's the fresh start that Jesus is offering you right now here today. See, we all need God's grace.

We've all sinned. We've all turned our backs on God. We've gone our own way. We've missed the mark. And because of that sin, we're all separated from God living in darkness, in need of hope, burdened without peace. We're all in need of a fresh start with God. You know, Jesus was born in a manger and he grew up and lived a perfect life, and he gave his life for us on the cross so that all of our sins could be forgiven so that you and I, so that we could walk in light.

Instead of in darkness, so that you can have peace and hope in a world that seems so full of chaos and pain and so that you can have a fresh start with God today and your God's redeeming grace. That's the greatest gift that has ever been given, and if you've never accepted it, I want to invite you to open your heart to it and to Jesus and accept it today.

Here's what's gonna happen. If you do look at our final verse. Uh, I want you to read this verse out loud with me today. Wherever you're joining us for church

online. Read this out loud with me. Second Corinthians five 17. God's promise to you this Christmas. Let's read it together. Are you ready? Go. This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person.

The old life is gone. A new life has begun. Christ the Savior was born to give you new life. And in just a moment, we're gonna sing about that new life. We're gonna sing Silent Night together. But before we do, let's go to God in prayer right now. Wherever you're joining me for church online today, would you bow your head and close your eyes and let's go to God in prayer right now.

As we pray, the good news of Christmas is that God loves you, that you can have hope and peace, and you can have a fresh start through Jesus. You can know God and you can go to heaven no matter who you are, no matter what mistakes you've made in your life. And listen, if you've never accepted Jesus as your savior and the leader of your life right now, would you just pray this simple prayer with me as I prayed out loud?

Would you just pray it quietly in your heart? Simply this, Jesus, I believe in you. Thank you for stepping out of heaven and coming to earth. Thank you for dying on the cross so that my sins can be forgiven. God, I admit that I'm a sinner. I've made mistakes. So this Christmas, I invite you to come into my life.

Forgive me of my sins. I wanna live for you beginning today. And God, as we pray for all of us here today, we're living in this messy, broken world. We experience fear and we have doubts, and we have worries about the future. We carry heavy burdens, God, and we need your peace today. We put our hope in you.

Give us your peace. And may this Christmas be a time of love and joy as we put our trust in you and we pray this in Jesus name. Amen.