

Christmas Carols - Hark the Herald Angels Sing

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 continue with our teaching series called Christmas Carols. You know, each week during, uh, this series, we're taking a beloved, uh, Christmas Carol. We're looking at the story behind each Carol, but we're we're also exploring the, the deeper, uh, biblical meaning and message.

Behind each of these carols. And my hope is that, uh, during this series, you're gonna grow deeper in your faith, but also that you gain a new appreciation for Christmas carols as you sing them this Christmas. Now, today we're gonna look at, at, I think, a very familiar Christmas. Carol Hark. The Harold Angels sing.

So if you haven't yet, go ahead and click the button beside the livestream player, download your message notes so you can take notes and follow along during the message today. Now as we begin, I have to admit. I have a love-hate relationship with Hark. The Herald Angels sing because listen, when I was a kid, I took piano lessons.

Now I wasn't very good. I, I'm not what you would call musically gifted. And, uh, the Hark, the Herald Angels sing was the very first Christmas Carol I learned on the piano. And, uh, but I did just, that was fine. I didn't just learn it though. But to move to the next level in my piano lessons, I had to play that song in front of an audience.

And so it was a Sunday night and, uh, where there would be fewer people there. And when in our church, when we were receiving the offering at the end of the service, I was to go up and play Hark. The Harold Angels sing while they received the offering. Lemme tell you, I was so nervous. I was waiting before I even got up there.

But I got up there and I was nervous and it was time to start playing. And I played the first notes. And I played the wrong notes, and then I think I played every wrong note after that. In fact, what I played, I don't think anybody could have recognized it as Hark. The Herald Angels sing, and by the time it was over, I was humiliated, I was covered with sweat.

I slunk back to, to my chair and sat down. The only person I think who was, uh, felt worse about it than I did was the pastor, because I guarantee you nobody

gave any money during the offering. When I played that. So now listen, every time I hear Hark the Herald angels sing, I get a little sh uh, sh shutter inside when I think back to that day.

But even though I had that experience, I have to admit, I love this Christmas Carol because every time that I hear the words and I reflect on the words of Hark, the Herald Angels sing. I remember why we still sing this Carol today, almost 300 years after it was first written. You see Hart, the Herald Angels Sing was written by, um, by Charles Wesley, who's the younger brother of John Wesley, the founder of, of the Methodist denomination.

Now, Charles was also a leader of the Methodist denomination, but throughout his life as, as, as a pastor, he wrote. Over 6,500 hymns. That's a lot of music to write and I'm gonna come back to that in in just a moment. But it was on Christmas day, about a year after Charles's conversion through the Christian faith on Christmas day.

He's walking to church and he hears the Christmas bells of London playing, and he's so inspired that he pins the word to a poem that he calls hark. Now Hark. The poem was first published in 1739, but it was a few years after that when a good friend of Charles Wesley's, uh, George Whitfield, who was also a pastor, took those words from the poem, hark and adapted them to music that became the, the Carol that we know today as Hark.

The Harold Angels sing. Now Har the Herald Angels sing is based on Luke chapter two, and it tells the story of the angels announcement of the good news of Jesus' birth to the shepherds on that first Christmas night. But within this Carol, we find some deep spiritual truths about who Jesus really is, not just a baby born in a manger.

But the one true God, stepping out of heaven and coming to earth to save the world from its sins. No wonder the angels got so excited. So the story begins in Luke chapter two, verse eight. Now I wanna look at the Bible story before we jump in and look at the Carol. So in your notes, I wanna put it up on the screen, uh, as, as well.

You see, uh, Luke chapter two, verse eight. Here's what it says. That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them and the radiance

of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified that the angel reassured them.

Don't be afraid. He said, I bring you good news. That will bring great joy to all people. Listen now asks our worship team to come and to lead us in, in this famous Carol Hark the Herald Angels Sing. And wherever you're joining us for church online, I wanna encourage you to, to join along and sing with our worship team, uh, this carol.

If you don't wanna sing, that's fine, but at least read the words as we go through, because maybe you haven't paid attention to the words of this carol in a long time or ever before. I want you to just pay special attention to what this carol says and to the words. In their meaning as we sing Hark the Herald Angels sing right now,

Hark! The herald angels sing
 "Glory to the new-born king
 Peace on earth and mercy mild
 God and sinners reconciled"
 Joyful all ye nations rise
 Join the triumph of the skies
 With angelic host proclaim
 "Christ is born in Bethlehem"
 Hark! The herald angels sing
 "Glory to the new-born king"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
 Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
 Light and life to all He brings
 Risen with healing in His wings
 Mild He lays His glory by
 Born that man no more may die
 Born to raise the sons of earth
 Born to give them second birth
 Hark! The herald angels sing
 "Glory to the new-born king"

Hark! The herald angels sing
 "Glory to the new-born king
 Peace on earth and mercy mild

God and sinners reconciled"
 Joyful all ye nations rise
 Join the triumph of the skies
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 "Christ is born in Bethlehem"
 Hark! The herald angels sing
 "Glory to the new-born king"
 "Glory to the new-born king"

Now you've probably sung Hark The Herald Angels Sing more times than you can remember, but have you ever really paid attention to the words. You know, the reason Charles Wesley wrote so many hymns, I told you he wrote over 6,500 hymns during his life was because he saw music as an effective way to teach theology to normal people in the church.

And, and maybe you've sung this Christmas Carol many times before, but maybe you've never really considered the words. That's what I want us to do today. I want us to pay close attention to the meaning behind this classic Christmas carol and what it reveals to us about who Jesus is and, and why we are able to put our hope in him.

And so let's start with the Christmas Carol. Let, let's start with the first word. Hark. In fact, wherever you're joining us for church online, I want you to say that word out loud with me. Hark. Are you ready? Go. Hark. That's a fun word to say. Hark. We don't, we don't use that word very often, but this word carries special significance in this Christmas Carol.

Significant here, and here's what it means. I want you to write this down in your notes. Hark means to pay close attention. That's what hark means. It means to pay close attention. Now, this Carol begins by saying, hark, stop what you're doing. Pay attention, because angels have filled the sky and they're singing praises to God.

Something big is happening. We need to understand why this is happening. So hark, stop. Listen. Pay attention to what's going on because there's something important. There's something life changing. There's something that's gonna change the history of the world happening right now. Hark, you know, we need a little more hark in our lives today because sadly what happens at Christmas every year has very little to do with Jesus.

Santa Yes. Gifts. Yes. Family and travel, yes, but Jesus. Not so much. You know, we get so distracted by all the trappings of the season that we don't focus on Jesus. And by the way, it's okay to do all of those other things and enjoy them as long as you take time at Christmas to hark, to stop, to pay attention.

Make sure this Christmas you give your attention, not just to the flights and the fights and the food and the family, but you take time to pay attention to the newborn king. And that's what God wants you to do today. The same thing that the angels told the shepherds to do that first Christmas night to pay close attention.

So I don't want you to miss what this moment is really about. It's about Jesus, who he is, why he came. And why he matters so much to you. And so let's take a few moments today and let's just, wherever you are, let's hark. Let's stop. Let's pay attention and learn from Luke chapter two, how we can pay close attention and experience Jesus in a fresh way this Christmas.

So in your notes, how to experience Jesus this Christmas, and you know from heart, the Herald Angels Sing, I want you to see three truths, how to experience Jesus this Christmas. Here's the first one I pay close attention to Jesus. As God becoming man, write that in. I pay close attention to Jesus as God becoming man.

Now I wanna go back and look at the second verse of heart. The Herald Angels sing. I'm gonna put this up on, on the screen for you, but here's what it says in the second verse. Christ, by highest heaven adored Christ the everlasting Lord. Late in time behold him come Offspring of the virgin's womb veiled in flesh.

The Godhead, sea hell incarnate deity. In fact, I want you to circle that word in your, in your notes, if you see the, the words underline or circle that word incarnate. Incarnate. What does that mean? That means God in human form, incarnate means God. Jesus is God in human form. Then it continues pleased with us in flesh to dwell Jesus, our, and then look at that last word, Emmanuel.

Emmanuel is a name that was given for Jesus and it means God is with us. God with us. Now, today, I hear people all the time talk about what a great person Jesus was. What a great teacher, uh, he was. He was a, he was a great guy. And by the way, he, he was those things, but that's not who Jesus said he was. And that's not who the, the angels announced to the shepherds on that first Christmas night.

Hark. Here comes a good guy, hark. Here comes a great teacher, hark. He, he's got some good ideas that are gonna help you be a better person, a nice person in a, and live a better life. You know, that announcement wouldn't have been worth having a choir of angels to come and announce. Look at how the angels actually announced who Jesus is on that first Christmas.

It's in your notes. It's Luke chapter two, beginning of verse 11. Wherever you're joining us for Church Line, I want you to read this first out loud with me. I want you to pay attention to who the angels say that Jesus is. Let's read it out loud, beginning with the Savior. Are you ready? Go the Savior. Yes, the Messiah.

The Lord has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David, and you'll recognize him by this sign. You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger. So pay attention to, to who the angel say Jesus is. The first one is savior. If you're taking notes, circle that word savior. If this is the one who's come to save the world from its sins and save you and me.

From, from death and an eternity separated from God. So he's our savior. Then it, then going back to the, the passage circle, the word messiah. Messiah means the Christ, the promised one, sent from God to save the world. You see, the, the Jewish people had been waiting for the Messiah for centuries. Now, I want you to go back.

Now I want you to circle the word Lord. The angels say that He's the Lord, the one who has absolute control. Jesus is God being born. And so the angels say, hark, pay attention. The Savior, the Messiah, the Lord has been born. But then we see a confusing paradox because God wasn't born in a, in a palace. He was born in a manger.

God wasn't born in, in, in royal fancy clothes. He was, he was instead wrapped in just basic strips of cloth. He wasn't powerful. He was vulnerable. I mean, why, if this is the, the savior, the Messiah of the Lord, why was he born into such ordinary circumstances? Well, because when God stepped out, stepped out of heaven and into our world that first Christmas, he stepped into it as one of us.

He wasn't just fully God, he was fully human. Jesus was God becoming man. Now, I know it can be really difficult to wrap our minds around what it means that Jesus was a hundred percent God and a hundred percent, uh, human. But

to be honest, would you really want to worship a God who was so easy to understand?

It's a wonderful mystery, but what does it mean to us that Jesus is God becoming man? Well, I want you to think about this because Jesus was fully human. He fully strong. He fully understands the struggles that you and I face in everyday life. Jesus knows what fear is. Jesus knows what stress and anxiety are like.

He knows pain. He felt all of those things firsthand by being fully human. So let, let me just say this. There's nothing that you're going through in life right now that Jesus can't fully relate to and understand, but he's also fully God, and that means that Jesus is also all powerful. And just as Jesus in his ministry calmed the storm on the sea of Galilee.

He has the power to calm whatever storm you're going through in your life right now, the sudden storm of losing a child, the storm of a divorce, the storm of finding out that you have cancer, the storm of a lost job or a lost dream. The storm of deep depression just as Jesus performed miracle after miracle in his life.

He can perform miracles in your life right now. He can bring victory when you feel defeated because he is fully God. Whatever you're going through right now, you can under you, you can believe in and trust that Jesus as fully human understands exactly what you're going through and as fully God, you can trust that Jesus has the power to bring you safely through whatever storm you're facing.

You know, one day during his ministry on Earth, Jesus called his disciples together and asked them. I believe the most important question that they would ever be asking in life. He asked them, who do you say that I am? And we pick up this story in Matthew chapter 16, verse 13. Look at, look at what happens.

This is when Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi. He asked his disciples, who do people say that the son of man is? In other words, Jesus is asking, what are other people saying about me? What are, who are they saying that that, uh, uh, I am. And then it continues. Well, they replied. Some say John the Baptist.

Some say Elijah and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. They say, Jesus, you know, people are saying that you're a great guy, but you're a human. You're, you're, you're a prophet. You're a great teacher. That's what people were saying about him. Then our story continues. Then he asked them, but who do you say that I am?

In other words, Jesus says, it doesn't matter what others are saying about me. Who do you say that I am? And then look at this response. Simon Peter answered, you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Peter said, Jesus, you are the son of God. You're God in human form. You're the one sent to save the world from his sins.

You know, Jesus has many names in scripture. But the name that really stands out at Christmas, the name that is in our Carol Hark. The Herald Angels Sing is the name given to Jesus, Emmanuel, Emmanuel, and Emmanuel means God with us. And see, God stepped out of heaven and became a human being to live among us and to save us.

And Jesus is Emmanuel. He is God with us. Do you believe that? Have you ever accepted the truth that Jesus is more than just a great teacher, a good person? Jesus is God stepping out of heaven and into our world out of love. He is a savior born in the man to give his life for you on the cross, he's arisen Lord, who proved his divinity by overcoming the power of sin and death through his resurrection.

To experience Jesus this Christmas, pay close attention to the truth that Jesus is God becoming man. Now, next in your notes, the the second truth that you need to understand if you wanna experience, uh, the, the real Jesus this Christmas in a, in a new, fresh way. The second truth from heart, the Herald Angels, uh, sing is this, I pay close attention to the peace that Jesus brings into my life.

I pay close attention to the peace that Jesus brings into my life. You know the second theological truth we discover about Jesus from Hark, the Harold Angels sing, is that Jesus is the prince of peace. In fact, from the final verse of Hark, the Harold Angels sing. Here's, here's the, are those words, I'll put 'em up on the screen.

It says, hell, the heaven born prince of peace, held the son of righteousness, light, and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings. I love these words

because in these words, this Carol echoes what the angels announced to the shepherds on that first Christmas night. Going back to our story in, uh, the Christmas story in Luke chapter two.

Now we're in verse 13. Here's what it, it says, so the angels up there, they, they're announcing the, the birth of Jesus. Then it says, suddenly the angel was joined by a vast host of others, the armies of heaven, praising God and saying, glory to God in highest heaven. And what? Peace on Earth. Underline those three words, peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.

I love this hark. Pay attention. The birth of Jesus brings peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased. Now, what does that mean? What does it mean that Jesus is the prince of peace, that Jesus brings peace to earth? Well, first, don't miss this. The first meaning is that Jesus brings peace between you and God.

You see when you believe that that Jesus is God, become man, and that he gave his life on the cross for your sins and you decide to follow him. When you do that, your sins are forgiven and the Bible says you have peace with God. Now the Bible is clear that we all sin. We, we all fall short of the standard that God has set for our lives, and sin separates us from God in this life.

But even more importantly, sin separates us from God for all of eternity. We miss out on heaven. Sin. What it does is it creates animosity between us and God because it's, it's us turning our backs on God and, and because of that, We have no peace with God, but the Bible says, and this is all we learned at Christmas, that God loves us so much that he sent his only son into our world.

Then if we believe in him, if we receive the free gift of forgiveness that Jesus offers us, that sin is removed, that separation that's between us and God is overcome. And now instead of brokenness, we can experience peace with God, a real relationship with God. And lemme tell you this, when you have peace with God, It changes everything.

When you have peace with God, Jesus can then bring peace to your most important relationships. Because think about this, just as Jesus's forgiveness brings peace, your you, peace with God, you now have the power to bring peace to your most important relationships. Peace to your family, peace to your marriage, peace to maybe broken friendships that are in your life because you've been forgiven when you didn't deserve it.

Now you have the power to forgive those who hurt you. Even when they don't deserve it, and forgiveness brings peace, you see through Jesus, you have the power to bring peace to the broken relationships in your life. Now, next week, We're gonna talk about how to have this, this peace in every area of your life.

When, when we look at, uh, uh, uh, our next Christmas Carol, we'll, I'll talk to you about that in, in, in a little bit. But for now, just know that Jesus came on Christmas to bring peace in your relationship with God and to bring peace in your relationship with others. So you, you may be thinking, well, Kerik, if, if Jesus is the prince of peace, if he brings peace into my life and into the world, then why?

When I look around, why does it seem like there's so little peace on earth? You know, why are there so many wars and so much hatred, and so much violence and so much injustice? Well, well, there's no peace in the world. Because there's no peace between nations and there's no peace between nations because there's no peace in our communities and there's no peace in our communities because we don't have any peace in our families, and we don't have any peace in our families because we don't have any peace in our hearts, and we don't have peace in our hearts because we don't have peace with God.

You see, peace with God is the key to having peace on earth. . Peace in your marriage, peace with your family, peace with your friends, and with your coworkers. Now listen, this world is not heaven and it never will be, and so it's not perfect. There are al. There's always gonna be fighting and conflict and pain and fear, but here's the promise of Christmas.

With Jesus, you can experience peace even in the midst of trials and sorrows, even when nothing or no one around you seems to be at peace. With Jesus, you can experience peace in your heart because you know that he's in control. Even when life seems out of control, he's with you guiding you, empowering you, and giving you peace.

And that's what it means, that Jesus is the prince of peace. Look at our next verse, John chapter 14, verse 27. These are the words of Jesus. So let's read them out loud together, beginning with I am. Are you ready? Go. I am leave leaving you with a gift. Peace of mind and heart and the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give.

So don't be troubled or afraid. Let me ask you this. Where do you need peace in your life right now at work in your dating life when it comes to your finances with your kids in your marriage? Listen, if you've never experienced the peace that Jesus offers, if right now in your life you're struggling with conflict and fear, and stress and anxiety and depression, you don't have to live that way anymore.

You can experience Jesus's peace in your life, in your heart today, Jesus's peace. Remember, it's not the removal of difficulties. Those are always gonna be there. But what Jesus' peace offers is peace in the storm. It offers his presence in the darkness, his power for the fight. It's it's peace, not because of the removal of difficulties, but his peace in the midst of the difficulties.

If you want that piece, a piece that the world cannot offer, you can have it today. I'm gonna show you how you can receive it in just a moment. But first, let me give you the final truth from Hark. The Herald Angels sings that will enable you to experience Jesus in a fresh way. This Christmas, in your notes, I want you to write this down.

I pay close attention to the eternal life that Jesus offers me. I pay close attention to the eternal life that Jesus offers me. Looking at the final words from Hark, the Herald Angels sing. Here's how the, the classic Carol ends. It says, mild. He lays his glory by, in other words, Jesus, by being born as a human, being laid aside his glory as God.

So it says mild. He lays his glory by born that we no more may die, so that we could have eternal life born to raise us from the earth. Talking about the resurrection. Born to give us second birth, a spiritual birth in a home in heaven. You see, on that first Christmas, God stepped out of heaven. He laid his power and glory as God to the side, and was born as a small, vulnerable baby in a manger in an out of the way.

Forgotten little town and that baby. Grew up and lived a sinless life. He taught us what it means to live life to the fullest. And because he lived without sin and he was fully God and fully human, Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for our sins. And because of that, Jesus took our place on the cross and he took the punishment that you and I deserved so that you and I can have eternal life so that we can spend all of eternity in heaven.

You see, that's what the angels wanted the shepherds to know and pay attention to. That's why they say at heart, pay attention. Listen to what's going on. They wanted them to know this and listen, that's what God wants you to pay attention to today. If you've never received this gift of eternal life, if you've never settled this issue of finally getting right with God, I, if you were to die today and you're not sure where you would spend eternity in Heaven or in a place called Hell.

Let me ask you this. What are you doing? What are you waiting for? How could, how could you turn down the greatest Christmas gift that has ever been offered? How could you gamble with your eternity like that? This is the gift of eternal life that Jesus came to bring you at Christmas. Our memory verse for this week is found in John chapter three, verse 16.

Again, it's the words of Jesus. I'd love for you to read. Uh, this passage out loud with me, John three 16 and 17. So wherever you're joining us for church online, read this with me, beginning with, for God. Are you ready? Go for God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only son so that everyone who believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life.

God sent his son into the world, not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. You see, Jesus loved you so much that he went through the cross for you. All you have to do to receive eternal life is to believe that Jesus is who He says He is the Savior, the Lord the Messiah. Jesus is fully God and fully human.

He is the prince of peace. And today, if you will ask him into your heart, he will be your savior hark. Pay close attention. The angels are about to sing. They're about to announce the most incredible news that the savior has been born. What will your response to the angels message be? How will you respond to the good news of Jesus today?

Well, let me show you how the shepherds responded when, when they heard the heart, when they heard the good news, and they paid attention. Here's how they responded. Luke two 15, it says, when the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherd said to each other. Let's go. They said, let's go to Bethlehem. Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

Listen today. If you have never believed, if you have never received this free gift of eternal life, that Jesus offers you the free gift of peace and eternal life, you can do that right now as we pray. So would you do this wherever you're joining us for church online? Would you bow your heads and close your eyes right now?

Let this be a time between you and God. Maybe you need to make peace with God right now. So I just want you to pray with me as I pray out loud. Father, thank you for loving us so much that you stepped out of heaven and came to earth on that first Christmas. Thank you for the gift of eternal life. Born that we know more may die.

Born to raise us from the Earth. Born to give us second birth. Listen, as we pray right now, heads, bow and eyes closed. If you're already a Christian right now, as we pray, recommit to experience Jesus in truth this Christmas, recommit to your belief that Jesus is fully God and fully human, that he is the prince of peace and as your savior, he is the one who's given you the gift of eternal life.

Thank him for that. But if you've never put your trust in Jesus before, as we pray, if you've never believed in him, don't put it off any longer. Don't gamble with your eternity any longer today, this Christmas. Let it be the time you finally get right with God. And if you're ready right now, I want you to pray this prayer in your heart as I pray it out loud.

Simply pray this, Jesus. I believe that you are fully God and fully human. I believe that you died on the cross as a sacrifice for my sin, and that you were raised from the dead to overcome the power of sin and death. I put my trust in you today, and I ask you, you to come into my life and forgive me of my sins.

Make me right with God. Give me peace with God and give me a home in heaven forever. I commit to follow you from this day forward as a part of your church. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.