

On Christmas Night All Christians Sing



On this night news of glad tidings was brought from angelic messengers. On this night it is right for all Christians to gather to sing. Some will come caught up in a spirit of reuniting with family. Others come with the anticipation of gifts. Some arrive with the expectation of Immanuel, God with us. On Christmas night many of us are likely filled with some mixture of all of these sentiments.

This English carol is a call to worship to proclaim the wonderful news of God coming to live among us. It is meant to be a clarion call to awaken us to the true reason we celebrate. As a carol it is also a call to go out into the world and share the joy and revel in the news. We have received “news of great joy, news of great mirth, news of our merciful King’s birth.” Angels went out into the night to greet shepherds that first Christmas night. We are compelled to join with these messengers every year after to sing!

The second stanza assures us that we have great reason to enter into the cheerful glee. “Why should we on earth be so sad, since our Redeemer made us glad?” Jesus has come to set us free from our sin. We sing this truth to praise God that our liberty has already been won. On Christmas night we do not gather to compare gifts or vacations. On Christmas night our mood should not be anchored to the retail value of the presents at home. The greatest gift has already been given!

In view of all that Christ has done for us there is no apparent reason for sadness. However, we must also be mindful that for many the holidays are reminders of lost loved ones, fractured relationships, wayward relatives and of mounting debt. For some in our congregations, Christmas night is a reminder of all that has not been right in their world.

Praise be to God a welcoming Light has appeared. The third stanza contrasts night with light. “All out of darkness we have light.” There is a possible double meaning in this phrase. In one sense it is a call for us to come out of our separate literal darkness of night into the light of a company of travelling carolers. In another sense, it is a call out of our spiritual darkness and into the Light of the World, which has come to earth. It is especially needful for those who struggle through the holidays to find our congregations safe places for them to open the inner darkness of their pain up to the Light of Christ. This Light can be experienced through the body of Christ.

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