

Sermon 12-24-20 — Sing We Now of Christmas  
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We gather tonight to celebrate Christ's birth, in one of the most special worship services of the year. With the possible exception of Easter more people attend church on Christmas Eve than on any other day. Why is that? What makes this service special to so many?

Close your eyes for a moment and think back on the Christmas Eve services that were special to you... What comes to mind?... As a pastor I would like to think it was the wonderful sermons, but, truth be told, I don't even remember most of the Christmas sermons I have preached. When I think back on Christmas Eve what comes to mind is the music. The carols we sing, the special music, **singing Silent Night** as we lift our candles. Music has a way of staying with us and becoming a part of our lives in ways that sermons simply don't. Maybe can't.

Music has a way of reaching deep down inside us and touching something that words just can't reach. It reassures us, comforts us, reminds us of not only who we are but who we are meant to be. That is why, when we are sad or lonely or struggling, we often turn to music, to songs from the past that carry a special meaning for us. It is why when we seek to praise God we often sing a favorite hymn or song of praise.

Martha Williams tells of a time when God touched her life through music. Her father had died and she was struggling with grief. She went to a therapist for help and shared with him how much music had meant to her father. His favorite song had been "How Great Thou Art." They had played it at his funeral and it helped a bit but she still had lots of questions. She especially wanted assurance that her father was all right.

On her way out of the therapist's office Martha was joined on the elevator by a pleasant looking man. As they stepped out of the elevator and onto the street the man began to sing, "Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee". Somehow the music and the words touched Martha in a way that the funeral service had not, and a sense of peace flowed over her. Somehow she just knew that her dad was fine. She turned to thank the man for his gift of song but he disappeared around a corner. Martha hurried around the corner but there was no one in sight. The man was gone. Was he an angel? Martha Williamson doesn't know. But she knows that she found great comfort in the song he sang.

That is the thing about music. Music has a way of touching us to the core. It helps us to express emotions so deep that we can't put them into words or express in any other way. That is why so many songs speak of love and death and pain; things that reach into the very center of our being. Things that we struggle to talk about or find words to express.

Practical, logical things are best expressed with words. But feelings are best captured in song. That is why you don't hear many top ten hits about algebra or General Accounting Practices. Music, at its best, allows us to experience and express feelings that are just too deep for words.

I believe that that is why the angels sang on the night Jesus was born. They sang out, "**Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.**" (Luke 2:14) How else could they express a love so deep that it gave up heaven to dwell among us? How, but through music, can you speak of a God who so loved the world that he gave his only son? You cannot express that kind of love in words. To speak of a love that deep, that giving, you need music. You need song. Is it any wonder that this night, in churches and homes around the world, we will play and sing carols of Christmas celebration.

Isn't that why we gathered tonight? You didn't come to hear me preach. I get that. You came to celebrate the birth of your savior. You came to raise your voices as one and sing the songs of Christmas. We sing of the little town where Jesus was born, of what happened on that night so long ago, of the angels and the shepherds, of a **babe in a manger**, and of a God who loved us enough to give up heaven and be born among us in the shadow of the cross. We **lift our candles** and sing of a silent night, a holy night, when Christ was born.

As I was praying about what to preach tonight it came to me that a love like that can't be expressed in words alone, no matter how eloquent. Which is why this night, especially this night, we sing, we sing the songs of Christmas.

We sing because the music reminds us of who we are and whose we are. We sing because it offers hope in the darkness, healing to the hurting, and deep assurance of God's love. But this night, especially this night, we sing because music is one of the most powerful ways we have to offer our thanks and praise to God. That is what Luke tells us the angels were doing on that first Christmas night. He writes: **"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'" (Luke 2:13,14)** Music is more than entertainment. It is more than inspiration. Music is our most powerful way of expressing our love and offering praise to God. Music is where we turn when words alone are just not enough. The songs we sing tonight are intended to do more than just bring back warm memories of Christmas past. The songs we sing tonight are the Christmas gifts we offer back to God. After all, Christmas is not our birthday. It is Christ's. Which is why we lift up our voices tonight, like the angels 2000 years ago, offering gifts of thanks and praise. And it is my guess that that is why you joined us tonight.

And that is what we should do right now...