

“Sing a New Christmas Song”

December 24, 2016

The First Christmas Songs series

Join me in singing if you know it:

City sidewalks, busy sidewalks

Dressed in holiday style

In the air there's a feeling of Christmas

Children laughing, people passing

Meeting smile after smile

And on every street corner you hear

Silver bells, (silver bells) silver bells (silver bells)

It's Christmas time in the city

Ring-a-ling, (ring-a-ling)

Hear them ring, (hear them ring)

Soon it will be Christmas day

We've been singing during this Advent season – songs that we hear on the radio every year, but then putting them up against the songs we hear in Scripture - songs from people who are a part of the Christmas story. And the songs from Mary and others are quite a bit different than what we sing each year.

Now there's nothing wrong with good Christmas songs, but we have to go deeper into what Christmas means. I know that when the lights go up on the bridge, Christmas is coming. I know that when Christmas cards come in the mail, it's almost time. I know that when we're trying to figure out our December calendar and meeting up with family and friends, it must be Christmastime. I know that when shelves at Meijer are empty on December 23, Christmas is near.

But there's more to it. We heard Psalm 96 tonight – this song of praise because God is good and God is in control. And yet, I know that for some of us, that's difficult to believe. There are people struggling through this season because of grief that's recent and not-so-recent. People are battling illness or trying to reconcile with loved ones. People are in pain. All of us have our own stuff.

Many of us are seeking hope and help, and maybe it seems strange that we'd put our hope in a baby born so many years ago. Maybe it's odd that we trust in God's presence in the most unexpected of places. I invite you to watch this video called “A Great Light.” You'll hear the words of the prophet Isaiah again, but pay close attention to how these children prepare for the arrival of

a special guest. This is a vivid depiction of what Christmas is all about:

MEDIA: "A GREAT LIGHT"

Did you notice? The kids washed up, dressed up, rolled out the carpet, and waited with smiles and flowers for their guest. And when he showed up, he wasn't what they expected. He was like them, and maybe they thought he was supposed to be different.

Maybe that's our struggle, too. Everything about Jesus is so unexpected. He comes to us – to be with us and to be one of us. And did you notice? This one who came brought the light, turned it on, and took on their burdens. He healed them. He carried their heavy load.

Friends, that's the Good News of Christmas. That's the new song that we sing – that God's love is so wide and deep and real that he is with us. God knows our needs. God carries our burdens. God ultimately brings healing.

Maybe it's not a new song for you. Maybe it's not new lyrics or a new tune, but living our faith with new energy, new excitement, and new enthusiasm is crucial in a time when there are so many people hurting. Remembering that God's grace and love extend to us and to the whole world is a powerful truth of Christmas that we have to share.

We have to share it because Isaiah's reality of people walking in darkness is still our reality. We don't have to look far to see people in pain, and we need to claim our call to fight against hate, injustice, oppression, and violence in the world.

Isaiah is certain of a better day that's coming because of God's faithfulness. Isaiah lifts up the work of the One God will send: Wonderful Counselor – a wise leader, Mighty God – a powerful leader, Everlasting Father – a concerned leader, Prince of Peace – a compassionate leader. We see all of those characteristics in Jesus, and we're called to walk with him.

He is the One who comes bring wisdom as we seek to live faithfully. His power is God's power – not power that overtakes and "wins," but the power is love that is always stronger than evil, death, and all the struggles that we face. He is the One whose strength is everlasting – he doesn't grow weary even when we do - and I know that some of us are weary. He is the One who brings peace – not simply the absence of conflict or peace that comes easily – but peace that comes as we trust in the Lord.

Yes, Christmas is about Jesus' birth, but it's also about who Jesus is – our Lord and Savior who triumphs over sin and death to bring new life and hope. May we sing a new song and live what we believe in our hearts: that God is in control and is always at work even now to bring healing and hope to our world. May we seek every day to live as those who belong to Kingdom of God. Thanks be to God! AMEN.