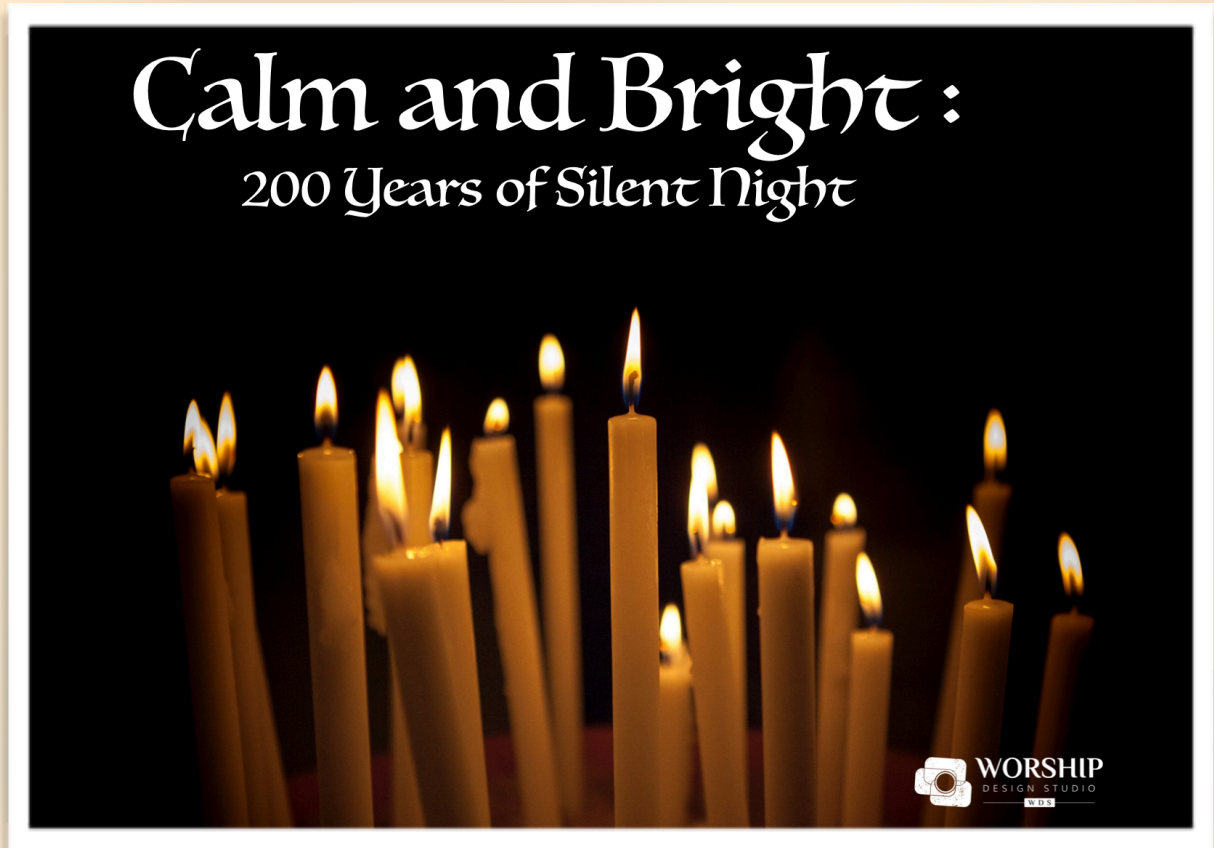


Calm and Bright: 200 Years of Silent Night



"While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." - Luke 2: 6

This year is the 200th anniversary of the debut of "Silent Night, Holy Night." This hymn has become the best-loved worship moment of many Christians—even those who only come to church once a year. Something mystical occurs as we light our candles and sing the hope of "all is calm, all is bright"—peace and light for the world. This worship series will celebrate the carol's message over the entire season of Advent and highlight its call for our lives that can guide us all year long.

Advent 1: Sleep in Peace - PEACE

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

In days to come

*the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.*

*Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."*

*For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

*He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more. - Isaiah 2: 1-4*

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined...*

*For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named*

*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting [Parent], Prince of Peace.*

*His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.*

*He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.*

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. - Isaiah 9: 2, 6-7

*Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child
Holy Infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace - vs. 1*

One of the most famous stories about this beloved hymn took place in World War One. British and German soldiers on the front lines called a truce on Christmas Day. So close where the encampments from which they were fighting one another, they could hear each other in the peaceful quiet of the truce singing "Silent Night," each in their own language. This prompted the soldiers to come out and meet on the battlefield, without weapons, and they spent the day playing soccer and exchanging small gifts—whatever they had. Humanity is the holy infant for whom God so desires a heavenly peace. Is it possible to bring calm and bright to our own corners of this world?

Advent 2: Glories Stream - JOY

*All the nations that you've made will come
and bow down before you, Lord;
they will glorify your name,
because you are awesome
and a wonder-worker.*

You are God. Just you.

*Teach me your way, Lord,
so that I can walk in your truth.*

Make my heart focused

only on honoring your name. - Psalm 86:

9-11

Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors." - Luke 2: 8-20

The shepherds got quite a wake-up call that night when the sky lit up "like a Christmas tree" (so to speak). Awe at the transformative glory of what God can do in our lives is the focus this week. Glories are streaming every day if we only have eyes to see. How would our lives be renewed if we saw the world and our lives through the lens of wonder?

*Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing "Alleluia!"
Christ, the Savior is born,
Christ, the Savior is born - vs. 2*

Advent 3: Redeeming Grace - LOVE

*What came into being through the Word was life,
and the life was the light for all people. The light
shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn't
extinguish the light... The Word became flesh and
made his home among us. We have seen his
glory, glory like that of [an] only son, full of grace
and truth... From his fullness we have all received
grace upon grace; as the Law was given through
Moses, so grace and truth came into being
through Jesus Christ.- John 1: 1-18*

*Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light,
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth - vs. 3*

The presence of God in human form is the "dawn" of redeeming grace, says the hymn's third verse. God so desired to be "up close and personal" that God came to live, breathe, feel, teach, touch, and love. Made in the image of God, we are called to nurture relationships that birth, multiply and radiate grace in the world. What would the world be like if "love's pure light" was at the center?

Advent 4: Let us Sing - HOPE

*A child is born to us, a son is given to us,
and authority will be on his shoulders.
He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty
God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. - Isaiah 9: 6*

*After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of
Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came
from the east to Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is
the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star
in the east, and we've come to honor him." When
King Herod heard this, he was troubled... - Matthew 2: 1-12*

*Silent night! Holy night!
Wondrous star, lend thy light;
with the angels let us sing,
"Alleluia" to our King:
"Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born." - vs. 4*

The last verse of the hymn invites us to lift our voices in alleluia's to the one who is "King." This descriptor was more radical for the people of Jesus' time as it resisted the powers of empire that threatened "the least of these" that Jesus came to serve. We are reminded by this seemingly benign and sweet song that whenever there is injustice in this world, we are to look to the one whose power is love. How might this increase our hope for the future?

Christmas Eve: Calm and Bright

[The full hymn and the Christmas story]

"While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom." - Luke 2: 6

There is something about Christmas Eve. It is hard to describe that "something" that many of us feel and it is different, to be sure, for everyone. The older we are and the more memories we accumulate, the more complex the feeling becomes. Perhaps the tendency for reflection upon one's life and the presence or absence of loved ones on this night is why we love to hear "all is calm, all is bright." On this night we remember the promise of God—that God would be "Emmanuel," God-with-us forever more.

Sunday After Christmas: ...Is Born

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a [betrothed] beautifully dressed for [their beloved.] I heard a loud voice from the throne say, "Look! God's dwelling is here with humankind. [God] will dwell

with them, and they will be [God's] peoples...Then [God] said to me, "All is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will freely give water from the life-giving spring." - Revelation 21: 1-6

The story continues. Even though we feel as if the Christmas "season" is over and the tree is quick to come down, the real story begins again in the renewal of our very souls as God nudges us toward new life and possibilities in the new year. What is being born within us?

The Calm & Bright fully-scripted Worship Series comes with:

6 scripts with all liturgy, music suggestions, directions

6 scripts for children's time

Small group suggestions

Family at-home Advent Lighting Ritual

Visual and Media suggestions

Music Notes

Sermon Fodder

Get-Ready Webinar with Dr. McFee and guests

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