

Sermon - Three Songs of Christmas

Pastor Ed Blonski | December 25, 2022



Christmas Time

Merry Christmas!

Christmas time is a time for lights, presents, but especially a time of songs and singing.

You all have your favorite Christmas song.

You are probably thinking of that song right at this very moment!

Maybe you are also thinking that we didn't sing it in church yesterday or today.

It happens.

I had been a pastor for just over 1 year. My first parish was in rural Michigan.

As I planned what would be only my second Christmas Eve as a pastor, I had it in my mind to do something different.

My intention was to put together a Christmas service that was not the "same, ol' thing". I wanted to shake things up a bit.

So, I chose to not have us sing Silent Night that Christmas Eve.

I wish I could go back in time, and march into my office in Michigan and yell, “Wake up, stupid!”

How would you feel if you came to church on Christmas Eve and the service didn’t include “Silent Night”?

Yeah, that’s about how well it went that year for me.

Songs & Singing

Christmas. It’s a time of songs and singing. The music of Christmas has been on our radios and playlists since the beginning of November.

Certain songs get played more than others.

Certain songs must be played or it won’t seem like Christmas!

And many of you can sing a handful of Christmas songs from memory – that’s how much they are well-known and beloved.

Brings a song to our hearts

a) Songs of gratitude, longing, and joy.

No matter what your favorite Christmas song is – and maybe it changes through the years – I think I’m safe in saying that Christmas brings a song to your heart.

A song of gratitude.

A song of longing.

A song of joy.

Three Songs of Christmas

There are, at the very least, three different kinds of Christmas songs. And that’s what I want to explore with you this Christmas morning.

There are Christmas lullabies, sad songs, and joyful songs.

Lullabies

First, lullabies.

Examples of Christmas Lullabies are

a) **Away in a Manger**

Away in a Manger.

It is a lullaby, no matter what tune you sing it to.

Most of us know it – and love it -sung to the tune of the same name by James R. Murray.

Another favorite tune – by William Kirkpatrick – is actually called “Cradle Song.”

It is soft, swaying, and well-suited to sing or hum while getting a little one to sleep.

b) **Infant Holy, Infant Lowly**

Another Christmas lullaby that I imagine was a favorite of my great grandparents is Infant Holy, Infant Lowly.

It is a Polish Christmas carol from a long time ago, but relatively new to us in America as it wasn't translated into English until the 1920's.

c) **Silent Night**

Then there is Silent Night. We sing it at every Christmas Eve service (I'll never make that mistake again!) and whether you sing it in English or German, it is soothing and calming like good lullabies should be.



Sad songs

As I said, there are three types of Christmas songs. One of those types is “Sad Songs.”

a) **I'll Be Home for Christmas**

Whether sacred or secular, there are some songs at Christmas time that are sad, that have an air of longing to them.



I'll be Home for Christmas is one such song. It was written in the early 1940's and was a favorite of soldiers and civilians during World War 2.

What makes it especially sad is the last line "I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams."

b) Coventry Carol

The sacred song "Coventry Carol" is also one of the sad songs of Christmas.

It is also a lullaby but about the massacre of Bethlehem's boys by King Herod recorded in Matthew 2.

c) I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

Yet another sad Christmas song is I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day with words by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Inspired by the tragic death of his wife and the severe injuries of his son during the Civil War, it also was a telling of the sadness of the war itself as it mocked the angels' song of "Peace on earth, good will toward men."

Joyful Songs

Thankfully, there are also joyful songs at Christmas – and these are the most popular!

a) Joy to the World

Joy to the World is one of those – it even has the word "joy" in the title.

Ironically, Christmas is never mentioned in the song. It is based on Psalm 98 and is really about Jesus' reign as the Son of God and Savior of the World.

Which is true and started at Christmas, so many people would consider it a "must-have" at Christmas!

b) Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Another "must-have" joyful song is Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.



It is a Christmas song from start to finish, it is hard to sing this song any other way than with full-throated joy!

c) Now Sing We, Now Rejoice

And one more. Now Sing We, Now Rejoice.

I, for one, find it hard to sing this without at least a smile in my heart – and often with one on my face!

The German tune and its arrangement by Lutheran Richard Hillert is especially bouncy and joyful!

There is a song for everyone at Christmas time



There is a song for just about everyone at Christmas time. Even if you are frustrated with Christmas songs by now – after all, they've been playing on our radios since November 1 – on Christmas Day at least you have at least one song that holds a special place in your heart.

Christmas has lullabies – because a baby is born!

Maybe it is a lullaby. After all, Christmas is about a baby being born.

The Christ child born at Christmas stirs our own feelings.

Memories of our own children's first Christmas. I can vividly remember each of my sons' first Christmas and the joy that brought.

Jesus' birth – itself the fulfillment of hundreds and hundreds of prophecies recorded in the Old Testament – is at the same time unique and familiar.

Jesus started life the same way we all do.

But His life was also unique, in that He never once sinned. He also is the only-begotten and eternal Son of God through whom all was created.

Christmas has sad songs because with life comes also death in this world.

And Christ was born to ultimately die. That's why there are also sad songs at Christmas.

Because with life also comes death, sadly.

Soon after the birth of Jesus was the death of the boys of Bethlehem at the hand of King Herod.

And so many people closely associated with Jesus ended up dying because of their faith in and witness to Jesus.

But the Good News is that Jesus' death on the cross gives meaning to the death of all – and I mean all – His followers.

Christmas has joyful songs because ultimately that is what Christmas is all about – the joyous Good News of God's love for us in Jesus Christ.

And that's why there are also joyous songs of Christmas!

Because that is ultimately what Christmas is all about – the Good News, the joyous, wonderful, awesome Good News of God's love for us fulfilled, found, and incarnated in Jesus Christ!

Find your song at Christmas

So, I'll close by saying this. Find your song at Christmas.

It could be a sad song – first Christmas without a loved one.

It could be a sad song. Maybe this is the first Christmas without your husband, wife, parent, child. Or maybe it's yet another Christmas without them.

It can be a sad time.

But let me encourage you with this truth – God knows exactly what you are going through.

And God loves you and will comfort you – even through the sad songs of Christmas.

It could be a lullaby – this is your child's first Christmas.

Or maybe your song is a lullaby. For many of you, this is the first Christmas with your son or daughter.

Or it is yet another Christmas with a young one.



And that makes Christmas lullabies especially meaningful.

It could be a joyous song – as they all are in some way.

Whether your Christmas song is a sad song or a lullaby, it can be joyful in its way, yes? For Christmas is, at its heart, a joyful time.

God loves you. God saw your lowly, sinful condition, and stepped into it with you to save you.

Jesus was born to be one of you, one with you.

And Jesus lifts you up, cleans you off with His blood, and forgives your sins and gives you new life.

What a joy that is!

The three songs of Christmas. Sad songs, lullabies, and joyful songs.

Whatever your song is, I pray that you have a very, merry Christmas!