

“CAROLS FOR THE KING: O HOLY NIGHT”

LUKE 2

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Thank you Rick Briscoe and Deb Graham for *Mary Did You Know*. [pause for applause] We've been bringing messages at this Christmas season on *Carols For The King* and these carols a..., speak of the King who has come and the music that declares His birth and speaks of His life a..., is wrapped up in the glory of this season. A..., the melody and the beauty of this season is so much in the songs that we sing and that we share. So we've been looking at various carols at the Christmas season such as *Joy To The World* and *Silent Night* and this evening I wanna bring a message on one of the favorite carols of Christmas and take a biblical look at that carol which is *O Holy Night*. *O Holy Night* was originally a French carol. Yes, good things can come from France. [pause for congregation laughter] Ha, ha, ha! It was written by a parish priest, the words were written by a parish priest and the tune was delivered by a Jewish composer. So the church ultimately, in France, banned this song could not be sung in the church because it was written by such imperfect men, a parish priest who later defected from the church and this man who was not a believer in Jesus Christ. Later the song was translated into English in America and the man who gave us the words that we sing in this country and in the language of America is a..., these songs, this song was written by John Sullivan Dwight. He was a Unitarian preacher or minister who had some very interesting theological positions and yet God inspired this man to write the words of the song that we sing, *O Holy Night!* God uses imperfect people to do some amazing things, people like you and people like me who have the song of Jesus in our hearts. It is *O Holy Night*. In just a few moments Danna Miller is going to sing the song for us, but before she does that, let me remind you of what this song says and how the Scripture, how the Bible tells us the meaning of this song. Behind the music is a powerful message.

The 1st verse reminds us that Jesus brings us hope, now and forever. Listen to the words:

*Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.*

The word pining means yearning or desiring and God so created everyone of us that we have a desire, a yearning, a pining in our hearts to know Him and not only to know Him but to know what life is about.

Long lay the world in sin and error pining,

We live in a world full of terrorism and extremism. We're fighting a war on terror. In the last 100 years we have fought 3 great philosophies of life, fascism and in the 2nd World War that was defeated; communism, the cold war and ultimately democracy prevailed and now we're fighting an unseen battle in many cases and that is the war on terrorism. The world is full of fear and the world is full of war and hatred. But because Christ has come we have the promise of a bright and beautiful

future.

*Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Until He appeared and then the soul found it's worth.*

Our genuine worth, our real worth is discovered when we meet Jesus Christ.

The great reformer, Martin Luther once said that:

"You are valuable because God loves you. Because God loves you, you are valuable."

You're not...God doesn't love you because you're so valuable, but you're valuable because God loves you and your immortal soul, your eternal soul is precious to God. Therefore God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ so that your soul can find it's infinite and eternal worth in the Lord Jesus Christ and when you meet Him you discover that hope. I...I define hope as the presence of the future. Hope is the presence of the future. It's not something that we hope maybe some day will happen; we know that our hope is secure and our confidence is real, because of what Christ has done. He is the Savior and the one and only Lord. On occasion I've had the opportunity to visit the Holy Land, the land of Israel and Jerusalem and to go up to the Temple Mount, the place where the temple stood and now the Dome of The Rock, the second most sacred sight in the Islamic world is built upon that Holy Mount in Jerusalem and outside the Dome of The Rock is a very significant, yet simple sign, the words in Arabic say this.

*Allah is god. Allah is one.
He was not born, nor did he beget.
He was not born, nor did he beget.*

And thus this false religion is a hopeless religion without a god, without a Father who sent His only Son, Jesus Christ. In John chapter 3, verses 16, 17 and 18 we read the reason that Jesus was begotten of God the Father. John 3 and verses 16 and following:

16"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

God did indeed beget a Son and His name is Jesus and on that holy night, God in Christ came, reconciling, bringing the world unto Himself. What an incredible story it is. You see Cres...Christmas is not a..., a nice little story or legend about a Baby and a manger and shepherds; but it is the ultimate story of eternity. It is the story of how God loved you and loved you so much that He gave His Son.

Young Charlie was just 10 years of age when his a..., mother said, "We're going to the countryside for Christmas." And he was excited about that, he wanted to get away from the, the smog of London and, and the, and all of the traffic and so he and his family went out to the beautiful countryside of England and they were spending there a winters day when his mother said, "Charlie, how would you like to go for a ride in the car?" and he said, "I would love that." And so they got in the car and

little Charlie had his face pressed up against the window and was breathing, like children, on the window and writing his name and so on and...and yet the snow began to fall harder and harder and when they were making a turn Charlie's mother lost control of the car and she skidded into a ditch. She tried to back the car up and it wouldn't move. The tires were spinning. Little Charlie got out of the car and tried to help push it but to no avail. Well there was only one thing they could do and that was to begin to walk and to look for help. So they were trudging through the snow and about a mile down the road they found a..., a house; they knocked on the door. The light was burning, it looked warm and maybe they could find help. So they knocked on the door and a bright faced a..., English woman stepped to the door and welcomed them in. They sat by the fire and warmed themselves and they drank tea and ate cookies and called for help.

You say, well that's just an ordinary story, it's happened many times. Well, don't say that to the woman who welcomed them in that day, because young Charlie was Charles, Prince of England and his mother, the Queen. And that lady, from that day forward, who lived out in the country of England, never stopped telling the story, when the Prince and the Queen came to her house. If you have experienced the infinite worth of Jesus Christ in your life, if you have welcomed Him into your heart and into your home, then you will never stop telling the wonderful story of that day, of that holy night when Christ came in. And let me tell you something, because Christ has come into our lives, every day is a holy day and every night is a holy night. Jesus has come!

The chorus of this great carol of Christmas teaches us that we are to worship and reverence this One who has come.

*Fall on your knees, Oh, hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born!
O night, O holy night, O night divine!*

Angels worshipped Him and the only proper response to the coming of the King into the world is to worship Him. Wise men came from the east to bring Him gifts and to fall on their knees and pay Him tribute and honor. The only response of a wise man, a wise woman is to fall on bended knee and to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why we have come to this place on this Christmas Eve. It is to worship Him and when we worship Him we come, not flippantly or casually, but we come in adoration and devotion. [Matthew 6:9]

"...Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name."

Though He is our Friend, He is our Father in heaven who is holy.

*Led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,
Here came wise men from Orient land.
The King of kings lay thus lowly in a manger,
In all our trials born to be our Friend;*

Fall on your knees,...

Bow your knee to King Jesus. Mary's Little Lamb is worthy of all our worship.

The last stanza teaches us that we are to break down the walls that divide us from one another, that we are to love one another, even as Christ has loved us. Listen to these words of the 3rd and beautiful chorus written:

*Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His gospel is peace;*

The English translator, the man in America that I told you about earlier was a very ardent abolitionist, he hated slavery and thus he was moved to write in the translation these words:

*Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother,
And in His name all oppression shall cease.*

Jesus came, not only to build a relationship between God and man, but to enable us to relate to every person, our family, our friends, to have a great marriage, to be wonderful parents and have a great relationship with our children and not only the circle of our friends and the immediate a..., context of our lives, but also to put our arms around people that we've never met and to share the love of Christ, because every person, every person on the face of the earth is loved by God and that's why Christ came. Think about those who surrounded the scene at the first Christmas. There was Mary, who was a teenager, a young teenage girl. There was Joseph, a common laborer, a carpenter and then there were the shepherds who lived out in the fields and smelled of sheep and were outcasts from the society and the culture of their times. And then, of course, there were the wise men who came bringing expensive gifts and these great kings of the East, though they were Magi, came to celebrate and to worship Christ. And then there were old people as well, Anna, who worshiped the Lord and Simeon when he embraced the Lord Jesus he said, now I'm ready to go home to be with God, I'm ready to meet God: [Luke 2:30]

Because mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.

So whether a person is rich or poor, educated or uneducated. Whether a person is young or old, every person, every individual is included in the story of Christmas. Every one is invited to come and to worship the Lord Jesus Christ, not one, no matter who you are, you are not excluded from the love and the grace of God and when you receive that love and that grace than you want to give it to other people. You want others to know this Savior and that the change of oppression, spiritual oppression as well as other kinds of oppression can be broken. We are fighting a war in Iraq to free people who have lived under oppression because every person deserves to live in freedom. God made every man with the dignity of freedom and He breaks the chain of slavery.

At the Civil War, after the Civil War had concluded and Robert E. Lee, the general of the South went home, he being a dedicated Christian went to church one day to receive communion and he was kneeling at the front of that small church in Virginia when a man, who was a slave, who had been a slave, left the gallery in which he had been sitting; in those days many churches in the south had galleries, slave galleries where the slaves were separated from those who worshiped. It was a terrible time in the world and in America. But a man, an African American man came down and knelt by Robert E. Lee at that altar. Some were incensed and tried to get the man to move, but the great

general said, "No, no, no, he belongs here with me receiving this communion because this man is my brother in Christ." Every man, every woman is invited into the family of God. That's why Jesus said: [John 13:34]

"...Love, even as I have loved you..."

We often ask, how can I show Jesus' love at Christmas? Because of what He's done for me how can I express my love for Jesus? One of the best ways you can do that is by loving someone else, by showing the love that Jesus has given you. It is the reality of that love that makes Christmas real. If you know Jesus Christmas is real and all the rest of the stuff is just pretend. Now, I like a lot of the pretend stuff, it's fun, but if you don't have Jesus that's all you've got, just the pretend stuff. And listen, that's all you have in life without Jesus. It's all just about pretending unless you know Jesus and when you know Jesus you have an abundant life and a wonderful story to tell to the world.

The first time a man's voice was heard on the airways was on Christmas Eve 1906. Reginald Fessenden, a university professor in Pittsburgh, was the one who read these first words on the radio, the first time the radio was on the air. And what do you suppose the words that he read were? They were the words of Luke chapter 2:

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

And Mary and Joseph and he went on to read the story of Christ coming in to the world. And those who heard the garbled sounds of that first message carried on the radio were amazed, they were a..., on ships with telegraphs and the telegraphs in the newspaper offices across America, they were stunned as they listened to a human voice over garbled tones for the first time. But isn't it interesting that the first words that went out over the radio ~~was the~~...were the words of the greatest story ever told, the story of Jesus? And after Reginald finished reading the story of Christmas he picked up his violin and he began playing, *O Holy Night*. And for the first time music was played over the radio and though just a handful of people heard it, it set in motion a technology that has changed the world and music, song after song after song has been played on radio's throughout the generations, but not until after the first song was played the song that set everything else in motion, *O Holy Night*. It is the song of men and it is the song of angels. It is the most recorded and played song of all spiritual songs, *O Holy Night*, and I want you to listen to it again and I want you to listen to it as though you had never heard it before and without applause at the end we'll come back and light our candles. I just want us to meditate and think and contemplate of that holy night and just as those sat in amazement to hear the first radio program, *O Holy Night*, I want us to sit in amazement and in contemplation of the glorious music and message of Christmas of the Savior, the Christ who is divine, who has come into the world.