



Taking Gathered Worship Home

The Life of Faith-Rooted in God's Promises,
Running to the New Jerusalem

Third Week of Advent –December 16, 2007

“On Christmas Night All Christians Sing”

Traditional English Carol / Arr. by Ralph Vaughan Williams

History

This happy little carol known as “Sussex Carol” was popularized by one of the early 20th Century’s most famous composers, Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958). One of the things that made Vaughan Williams special was his use of old folk song material that he promoted in collections for churches, choirs and even his own compositions for orchestra. “Sussex Carol” was a song that Vaughan Williams and a colleague named Ceil Sharp first heard in West Sussex, England. While the writer of this carol is not known, its earliest appearance is in an Irish collection of sacred music printed in 1684 by a bishop named Luke Wadding.

This carol is intended to be sung alternating between unison and harmony (like a call-and-response). The first, second and fifth lines are to be unison (normal type) and the second, third and sixth lines are to be sung in harmony (italics). Another way to achieve a similar effect (particularly if you don’t have voices for harmony) is to alternate between one/two voices and the entire group of voices. Sing and give thanks to your Redeemer who has “rescued us from the dominion of darkness” and “qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.” (Col. 1:12-13).

Words

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| <p>1. On Christmas night all Christians sing, To hear the news the angels bring; <i>On Christmas night all Christians sing, To hear the news the angels bring:</i> News of great joy, news of great mirth, <i>News of our merciful King’s birth.</i></p> | <p>3. When sin departs before Your grace, Then life and health come in its place; <i>When sin departs before Your grace, Then life and health come in its place;</i> Angels and men with joy may sing, <i>All for to see the newborn King.</i></p> |
| <p>2. Then why should men on earth be sad, Since our Redeemer made us glad: <i>Then why should we on earth be sad, Since our Redeemer made us glad:</i> When from our sin He set us free, <i>All for to gain our liberty.</i></p> | <p>4. All out of darkness we have light Which made the angels sing this night; <i>All out of darkness we have light Which made the angels sing this night:</i> “Glory to God and peace to men, <i>Now and forevermore. Amen.”</i></p> |

This daily litany may be used as an aid for family or personal worship throughout the week.

The Rest Candle

Leader: Why do we light the Advent candle?

Family: **Jesus said, “I am the Light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the Light of Life.”**

Leader: What is the meaning of the third lighted candle?

Family: **The third candle is the Rest candle which represents God’s promised rest for His people from sin.**

Leader: How did God provide His people rest?

Family: **God completed the work of redemption through Christ the Son, so that His people have been brought into His finished labor.**

Leader: What does God in His Word say about that rest?

Family: **“For we who have believed enter that rest . . . For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.”** (Hebrews 4:3a,10)

Read aloud the history of the Christmas carol, “On Christmas Night All Christians Sing” and sing it together as a family (on back).

Closing prayer to be read in unison: Lord of the Sabbath, We praise You and give You thanks for securing our rest through Christ our Lord. We pray that You would enable us to work in Your harvest not as hired hands, but as beloved sons and daughters, secure in Your love for us that is found in Christ. Help Us to long for Your return Lord Jesus and to be bold in our witness for You as we await Your coming. Help us to glorify You in the way that we live. Teach us how to live as becomes sons and daughters of the King. For it is in Your name that we pray, Amen.

Priests are men appointed to mediate between God and man. In past weeks we have discussed the old testament priests. We noted how it was necessary for these priests to offer sacrifices for their own sins before they could enter the presence of God to mediate on our behalf. Since the blood of sheep and goats could not permanently take away sin, it was necessary for these sin sacrifices to be offered time and time again. Therein lies the superiority of Christ’s priesthood. The sinless state of Christ allowed Him to be the perfect, one time only sacrifice for our sin. Christ is the perfect mediator between God and man. Christ is a better hope.

Reading this week from Hebrews 7:4-28

Sunday 12/16

Read: Hope in the biblical context is not wishful thinking. Rather, hope refers to that which is certain. As Hebrews 6:19 states, the Christian possesses “a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain”. That “inner place” in the tabernacle is where God resides. So entering the “inner place” is entering into the presence of God.

Application: Time after time the book of Hebrews speaks of our ability to draw near to God. The removal of our sin allows us this privilege. As we draw near, we have the hope of being increasingly purified through our communion with God, to be given the strength and confidence to fight the good fight for Christ. Our forgiven states should remove all fear from our life (I John 4:18).

Pray: Your life in Christ would be fearless, full of hope in the One who has secured your future.

Monday 12/17

Read: God has called you out of your sin and into His service. He has a plan for you that places requirements on your life. The will of God has now become your will. The desire to serve your own purposes has been removed.

Application: As members of Gods household you are “to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called...” (Ephesians 4:1). Your hearts have been enlightened to the knowledge of the riches to which God has called you (Ephesians 1:18). You have been made aware of the “immeasurable greatness of his power” (Ephesians 1:19). This knowledge is to be reflected in the new way in which you live your life.

Pray: Gods purposes for your life would be revealed. That you would walk boldly and steadfastly in the direction he sets for your life.

Tuesday 12/18

Read: In Philippians 2:15 scripture tells us that we “shine as lights in the world” as we walk in the midst of “a crooked and twisted generation”. This concept of “shining as lights” is important. The changes Christ has wrought in your life must not be hidden.

Application: The hope that can be found in Christ is to be shared with a world in desperate need. You are told in Matthew 5:13 that, “You are the salt of the earth”. Salt is both a seasoning and a preservative. As a seasoning, the people of God add spice to the world. As a preservative, the people of God pronounce the message of Christ bringing the hope of eternal salvation to a fallen world.

Pray: That your life in Christ would be visible to the world in every word you speak and every deed you perform.

Wednesday 12/19

Read: To live your Christian life in a manner that makes you “the salt of the earth” requires discipline. Discipline is training that develops character, or also, a strict self control that facilitates obedience. For Christians, discipline comes through the training of Gods word. With hope centered on Christ you are more likely to lead a disciplined Christian life.

Application: In our new life in Christ we are to build discipline by training our self in Gods word. This training may be by self study, which requires consistent meditation on the Bible. Training may come from a pastor, Sunday school teacher or some other outside source. The end result is the same. Developing Christian character allows you to faithfully live your life Gods way.

Pray: Your desire would be to fervently seek strength from the word of God.

Thursday 12/20

Read: In our devotion Sunday we discussed how the Christian life should be fearless. Leading a fearless life does not mean you will never have fear. Rather, living a fearless life means you will take the proper action despite that fear. With hope centered on Christ you are less likely to be crippled by fear.

Application: What we have just defined is courage. If we are courageous in our walk with Christ we will choose to do the right thing rather than that which is convenient. We will stick to our convictions in Christ despite the implications. Each time you act in courage you will make your Christian life more confident.

Pray: That your courage would continually increase as you grow in your Christian life.

Friday 12/21

Read: In addition to discipline and courage, the Christian walk requires endurance. Endurance is a strong will not to quit. During life there is an almost constant barrage of quitting points. Those times when going on just doesn't seem feasible. These quitting points can be educational, psychological, emotional, even spiritual.

Application: The key to endurance is breaking through these quitting points. Looking ahead with vision can provide the encouragement needed to continue on in difficult situations. Imagine the spiritual boost to your life as you look ahead to see how God might use your life for the benefit of others. With hope centered on Christ you can break through any quitting point.

Pray: That your endurance in the Christian walk will be spurred on as you see the impact Christ can have on your life and the lives of others.

Saturday 12/22

Read: The old covenant of law was inferior. Even though the Bible describes the law as “holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12), the law in itself was not capable of producing obedience. Christ was bringing a new and better covenant, capable of cleansing sin and instilling the will of God in his people.

Application: The priesthood of Christ is rightfully described as superior. Jesus puts his laws in our minds and writes them on our hearts. He is our God and he has made us his people. His sacrifice on the cross is the catalyst for our new relationship with God.

Pray: Giving thanks for the way your heart and mind are guarded in Christ Jesus.