

The Songs of Christmas

ADVENT: Day 7

"O HOLY NIGHT"

*O holy night! The stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth.*

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

*A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.*

Fall on your knees!

O hear the angel voices!

O night divine, O night when Christ was born;

O night divine, O night, O night divine.

"O Holy Night" may have one of the more miraculous origin stories because the two men responsible for its creation weren't Christians. If you know the song, that might seem incredible. Its soaring music and moving lyrics have likely touched millions.

So it's surprising that these two men could have created such an enduring, powerful hymn of wonder. But God tends to do surprising things around Christmastime.

The story behind the song

In 1847, poet Placide Cappeau was asked to compose a poem for a Christmas service. However, he admitted that he didn't attend church very often. Nevertheless, he said yes to the request.

While on a bumpy coach ride on a dusty road in France, Cappeau read the gospel of Luke for inspiration. He imagined what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph the night Jesus was born. His thoughts became his poem, "O Holy Night." Realizing that God had inspired his words, Cappeau asked Adolphe Charles Adams, a Jewish friend, to compose music for his words.

Adams was a famous composer who didn't celebrate Christmas due to his Jewish heritage. Consequently, he didn't believe the subject of the poem was actually about God's holy Son. Yet Adams agreed to compose the music—and what a magnificent choice for posterity.

"O Holy Night" has been sung in churches around the world for hundreds of years. Very few people realize it was written and composed by two men who knew very little about Jesus.

Sharing Jesus

When an opportunity to talk about Jesus arises with your friends, family, or coworkers, how do you respond?

Do you immediately tell them about what he's done for you and what he can do for them? Or do you hang back and let them maybe say something spiritual so that you feel like you have a more open door for conversation? Or do you say nothing at all and hope that they might go to church somewhere so their pastor can share Jesus with them?

As Christians, we tend to vacillate between these responses depending on the person with whom we're talking. In other words, you may be more open to sharing Christ with a coworker than with your boss simply because of the power dynamics at play.

But consider what Jesus said to his disciples before they were sent out to tell others about him: "Do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour" (Matthew 10:19).

Jesus allows himself to be known by everyone. He can be seen in the miracles of nature, in the lives of believers, and in the words of the Bible. But, Jesus can also inspire and use people who don't have a strong faith.

God still inspires people today with great words and thoughts. If your friends, family, or coworkers are talking about Christmas or Christ and you want to help them believe, ask God what you should say. Let God's Holy Spirit give you his words. Then *speaks*.

God gave words to two unlikely men, and Christians have been singing "O Holy Night" for hundreds of years.

What will God help you say today?

"The Songs Tell the Story"
An Advent Devotional By: Janet Denison