

# *The Songs of Christmas*

ADVENT: Day 10

## “GOOD CHRISTIAN MEN REJOICE”

*Good Christian men, rejoice  
With heart and soul and voice;  
Give ye heed to what we say:  
Jesus Christ is born today!  
Ox and ass before him bow,  
and he is in the manger now.  
Christ is born today!  
Christ is born today!*

We sometimes forget how ancient our songs of faith are. And we can't fathom how many other people have worshipped with the same words we sing every Christmas.

For instance, “Good Christian Men Rejoice” may have originated in the fourteenth century.

To put that into perspective, 1325 marks the beginning of the Renaissance era in Italy. The Hundred Years' War started in 1337. John Wycliffe began translating the Latin Bible into English in 1376. And Chaucer started writing the Canterbury Tales in 1387.

Good Christian men—and women—have been rejoicing through this song for seven hundred years now.

### **The story behind the song**

In the 1300s, most people couldn't read. Only the wealthy could afford an education. Almost no one had a Bible in their home.

Consequently, preachers often traveled from place to place. Only the larger cities had sermons or lessons each week. So, churches found different ways for people to learn about God.

They made stained glass windows that retold stories from the Bible. They painted pictures that reminded people of biblical characters and stories. They taught people to sing hymns so they could learn and remember important truths from the Bible. Because so many were illiterate, the church had to find ways to tell the old, old stories in mediums other than print.

Because of its antiquity, we don't know who wrote "Good Christian Men Rejoice." But its lyrics make clear that the author simply wanted people to sing about Christmas and rejoice.

The author wanted people to know that Jesus was laid in a manger and that all of creation was supposed to "bow" before the baby who was also God's Son, a King. The author desired for people to know that Christmas was about the fact that "Christ is born today." Why today?

### **"Born today" to be "born again"**

When someone becomes a Christian, we say they are "born again" because Christ is "born" in their lives. (If you're unfamiliar with this phrase, read John 3:1–21, where a man named Nicodemus asked Jesus, "How can a man be born when he is old?")

The Bible also says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). How is someone born again?

Romans 10:9 answers that question: "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

I hope you and everyone in your family and circle of friends have been "born again." But, chances are, there is still someone you know who needs to choose to confess Jesus as Lord and believe that truth with their whole heart.

If someone came to your mind when you read those words, pause now and pray specifically for them.

Maybe this will be the first Christmas he or she will celebrate as a "born-again believer" with Christ as their Lord.

That would be a great reason for good Christians—and Christ—to rejoice today.

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