

The Songs of Christmas

ADVENT: Day 12

“IT CAME UPON THE MIDNIGHT CLEAR”

*It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From Angels playing near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold;*

*“Peace on the earth, good will to men,
From Heaven’s all-gracious King.”
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the Angels sing.*

Cultural upheavals didn’t begin in the twentieth century. Even though the last hundred years have resulted in both impressive and catastrophic change, one thing has remained the same ever since Adam and Eve first sinned: the yearning of the human heart for more.

More money. More time. More fame. More everything.

We crave more of what we think we need only to discover it doesn’t satisfy. Ask nearly any famous actor or athlete who’s achieved the pinnacle of their profession if meeting their lofty goal ultimately satisfied their soul.

Keep these thoughts in mind as you read on.

The story behind the song

Reverend Edmund Hamilton Sears only wrote two hymns in his life. One of them was “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear,” which he composed in 1849.

Reverend Sears lived in New England during a chaotic time in America’s history. The Gold Rush had caused many men to leave their families and go to California in search of money and notoriety.

The mid-1800s also saw the rise of the Industrial Revolution, when America began to mass manufacture all kinds of materials.

New machines required skilled workers, and many families left their farms and moved to the big cities. As more factories were built, the cities quickly became overcrowded.

Consequently, American culture changed.

Many didn't live with the same priorities of church and family that had once characterized the farming communities. Rather, they competed for jobs and gold.

(That doesn't sound too different from today—except we live in the Information Revolution.)

Those waning priorities caused Reverend Sears to grow concerned for American families and their faith, resulting in these words that could just as easily apply to twenty-first-century lives:

*And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow;
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing.
Oh rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing!*

Do you need rest this Christmas?

American culture is still hectic. We still compete for better jobs, more money, or greater popularity.

And Christmas can be an especially busy season of rushing around and spending money on what we hope will be perfect gifts. But Jesus was and is the only perfect Christmas gift.

Reverend Sears would suggest we sing his hymn and remember God's priorities at Christmas.

Let's "rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing."

What message did the angels sing?

"Peace on the earth, good will to men."

Those are God's Christmas priorities.

Will you make them yours?