

The Songs of Christmas

ADVENT: Day 15

"O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL"

*O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him,
Born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.*

The first printed version of "O Come, All Ye Faithful" was released in 1751—except that's not quite a true statement.

The first printed Latin version of the song was released in 1751, titled "Adeste Fidelis." An English version wouldn't be released until nearly a hundred years later.

Why? At the time and place of its initial Latin release, some Christians didn't believe hymns should be sung in English. They thought Latin was the only language for hymns. (The "worship wars" existed long before the "contemporary vs. traditional" debates of recent decades.)

But what a blessing that the song was eventually translated. Like many of the other hymns in this book, "O Come, All Ye Faithful" is a well-known and much-beloved Christmas song—even in English.

The story behind the song

"O Come, All Ye Faithful" was probably written by more than one person, and the lyrics have changed over the years. It's also one of the hymns that was "smuggled off" to England and translated there.

Over time, some of the words and ideas were changed during translation. Additional stanzas were added, and others were removed from the original version. Now, "O Come, All Ye Faithful" is a selection of stanzas from more than one of those translated versions.

But the message of this great Christmas carol is still the same today: to help us think about the people who came to see the newborn King and to worship and adore Jesus as they did. This hymn is for the faithful and reminds us that we are supposed to worship Christ as our Lord.

Thoughtful, faithful worship

All of us will sing this hymn, but we need to think about the words as we sing them. Jesus would want us to experience the same joy that the shepherds, Mary, Joseph, and the magi felt as they beheld the infant King in the manger.

The next time you attend church, look around. Watch people sing. Some are silent and might even try to be sneaking a peek at their phones. Some sing the words but don't look very thoughtful about what they're singing. Others sing with their hearts, thinking of the words and singing them to God. Some don't look like they are singing at all, but they might be praising God with their hearts.

I don't ask you to do this so you can judge others. Only God knows the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). But I want you to ask yourself: How does my worship reflect my relationship with God?

Jesus would want us to adore him, just like Mary and the wise men adored the infant Jesus.

Will you come to worship and be faithful? You can be faithful to pray, faithful to sing, and faithful to listen to God's word preached.

As you sing "O Come, All Ye Faithful," will you be joyful? Are you triumphant, knowing that Christ is your King?

There might have been several authors of this Christmas carol, but they all hoped for the same thing. They wanted to call all of the faithful to remember the manger scene in Bethlehem and joyfully worship Christ the Lord.

Will you sing this Christmas carol, faithfully? Jesus would love that!

"The Songs Tell the Story"

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