

# *The Songs of Christmas*

ADVENT: Day 21

## "SWEET LITTLE JESUS BOY"

*Sweet little Jesus boy, born in a manger  
Sweet little Holy child, we didn't know who You were  
Long time ago it seems, You were born  
Born in a manger Lord, sweet little Jesus boy*

Apparently, if you want to compose a Christmas carol that's sung long after you're gone, just take a walk during Christmastime in New York City.

Based on the origin stories of "Do You Hear What I Hear?" and "Sweet Little Jesus Boy," you only need to tread the streets of Manhattan to be inspired.

But, unlike the sweet reason that "Do You Hear What I Hear?" was written, "Sweet Little Jesus Boy" was inspired by the *opposite* of what Christmas truly means.

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

"Sweet Little Jesus Boy" is a spiritual, written in the language of an ex-slave. The words don't use perfect grammar, but they do use perfect truth.

On Christmas Eve in 1934, American Robert MacGimsey walked around New York City. He passed by one noisy bar or nightclub after another, blaring loud music amid secular Christmas celebrations.

But none of the sounds he heard had anything to do with the true meaning of Christmas.

In fact, MacGimsey found himself apologizing to Jesus because he realized he often left Jesus out of his celebration too.

### **Do you know who he is?**

American slaves were often mistreated, ignored, or considered unimportant. So was Jesus. He was born in a manger because no one

wanted to give up their space at the inn. The people didn't know who Jesus was.

The people in Bethlehem didn't know that the baby born to Mary that night was the Son of God. They didn't know Jesus had been born to take all our sins away. The song says they were blind and couldn't see because they didn't know who Jesus really was.

The great depth of "Sweet Little Jesus Boy" is that the song wasn't just written about those people in Bethlehem. It wasn't just that Jesus was mistreated by the people of his day.

The song is also about the fact that Jesus is still being mistreated by people every day.

Now, pause and honestly answer these questions:

- Have you become so busy you've forgotten about Jesus today?
- Have you listened to and sung songs that have nothing to do with Jesus?
- Have you allowed the world to nudge him off the throne of your heart?

All of us have. We still mistreat Jesus sometimes too. But, one thing has changed.

We know who Jesus was, is, and always will be. The baby ignored in Bethlehem is honored and glorified today.

May we celebrate this "sweet little Jesus boy's" birthday the right way this Christmas: with joy and honor and glory.

(And you don't have to be walking in New York City to do so!)