

The Songs of Christmas

ADVENT: Day 19

"DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?"

Said the night wind to the little lamb

Do you see what I see

Way up in the sky little lamb

Do you see what I see

A star, a star

Dancing in the night

With a tail as big as a kite

With a tail as big as a kite

"Do You Hear What I Hear?" begins with the night wind questioning a little lamb. In the second stanza, the lamb questions a shepherd boy. In the next stanza, the shepherd boy questions the king. In the final stanza, the king questions the world.

For such a simple song with a sweet melody, its lyrics paint an expansive vista. With its constant refrain of "Do you hear what I hear?", the lyricist wants us to ask ourselves, "Do you see what's really going on at Christmas?"

The origin story of this song brings an even greater depth and immediacy to its words.

The story behind the song

In October of 1962, American Noël Regney walked the streets of Manhattan on a cold day. As some of you may well remember, this was during the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the Soviets had missiles in Cuba poised and ready to destroy nearly any city in America. During his walk, Regney saw fear and worry written on every person's face.

But then he saw two mothers taking their babies for a walk in their strollers. He saw that the babies were smiling, laughing, and playing. Then he realized he was smiling too, and that the babies' faces held the opposite expressions of the adults he'd seen.

Regney never thought he would write a Christmas carol because, in his opinion, Christmas had become too commercial.

However, by the time he'd arrived home on that cold and memorable night, Regney had composed the words to "Do You Hear What I Hear?" in his head.

Later that evening, he wrote the words on paper, and his wife, Gloria, wrote the music for the Christmas carol we sing today.

Fear not

Sometimes, the news of our day causes us to feel worried or afraid. The words of this Christmas carol can help us remember the true peace we have in Jesus.

Our King would want us to pray for peace—everywhere. We can remember the holy child of Christmas, sleeping at night, and that Jesus came to bring the world both “goodness and light.”

Jesus will bring “goodness and light” this Christmas too. Do you know how? Jesus was talking to his disciples when he said, “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). There can be goodness and light in our world today if God’s people will allow their faith to shine. That is why God gave us his Holy Spirit. We don’t just “act” like a Christian. We can live as a person who has become like Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

A child of God is the light of the world. Will you ask Jesus to shine in your life today?

If so, he will bring light to the places you go, whenever you enter the room.

Do you hear what I hear?

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