

Christmas & the Visible God

I. Music & the Heart

A. Music and Christmas are woven together. Music invites us into wonder, it goes in the ears and straight to the heart.

- 1.** 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!

Music can draw us into **beholding** with wonder. Like the Magi, we see God in the face of a baby.

Matt 2.10 When they saw the star, they **rejoiced exceedingly** with **great joy**. **11** And going into the house they **saw** the child with Mary his mother, and they **fell down and worshiped him**. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

In his FACE, we see God and we see ourselves. The heart is free, expressed in opening our treasures, emptying ourselves to the One Who empties Himself.

- 2.** **Sing**, choirs of angels, **sing** in exultation,
O **sing**, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God,
All glory in the highest!
O come, let us adore him,... Christ the Lord!

Music serves no biological purpose. YET WE SING, and our hearts are formed by truth that is deeper than our minds.

Those who think that the universe is only material substance ... find it hard to explain music. They have to assume that music evolved but none of our alleged evolutionary cousins make music. Ever heard a chimpanzee sing?

Music is spiritual & physical, mathematical – It's made by the right length and weight of a string at the right tension, or the right

length and diameter of a tube and vibrating at the right frequency repeating in a tempo of sound and silence.

B. Music – Expresses Indescribable Unspeakable Joy!

3. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, **born** this happy morning,
Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n;
Word of the Father,
Now **in flesh** appearing!
O come, let us adore him,... Christ the Lord!

2 Cor 9.15 Thanks be to God for **his inexpressible gift!**

An Indescribable Gift, resulting in an Unspeakably Glorious Joy!

C. Music & Deep Longings – *I'll be Home for Christmas*

We are wired to seek the eternal, the infinite, the beautiful.

We were created by Love and for Love.

Love is fullness. Love is generosity. Love is overflow and gratitude.
Love sees the Universe properly, through the lens of love. Like *rose colored glasses*, love makes us see differently, – a more beautiful, kinder world.

Love is Eden.

When Adam and Eve fell, we **fell** from Love. **Like stray animals**, we've lost the home which once was so strengthening, we forget or have never known.

Outside of love, we are lost, hopeless and dangerous, committed to survival of the fittest. There's never enough to go around; our world is one of scarcity and competition for insufficient resources. Fear rules our hearts.

Born to be kings and queens we become slaves of our fears. Yet in many yearn for something better..

We need to see the face of God! When we can't see it, we are creatures of misery, frustration, futility, feeling our days are wasted.

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.

O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home ;
Make safe the way ...
Rejoice ! Rejoice ! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

Psa. 67:1 May God be gracious to us and bless us
and **make his face to shine upon us**, Selah
4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. Selah

II. Christmas – Beholding the Face (Image)

1 John 4.9 NIV **This is how** God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

And God comes to rescue us. He **shows us His face**. This is **HOW**:
In obscurity, in frailty and vulnerability.

He comes as a baby, helpless, needing to be held and nursed and cleaned and kept warm by conscious attention.

He comes without the capacity to speak. **The Word becomes inarticulate**, with no expressed wisdom or correction or judgment, but **simply needing to be with us**, to be received, to share our life.

#1 Joseph & Mary were the first to behold Him, born the King of angels, the first humans to behold the Face of God.

A **willing virgin** mother and a **loving dreamer** who found no suitable lodging, whose **difficult journey** was spurred by the insatiable pride of Augustus, yet brought them to the **City of David, Bethlehem, the House of Bread.**

Luke 2.6 NKJ So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. **7** And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because **there was no room** for them in the inn.

There in the stable the invisible God, made His Face visible to all creatures; the Creator had firmly entered creation.

#2 The **shepherds.**

Luke 2.8 NKJ Now there were in the same country **shepherds** living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** And behold, **an angel of the Lord** stood before them, and **the glory of the Lord** shone around them, and they were **greatly afraid.** **10** Then the angel said to them, "**Do not be afraid,** for behold, I bring you **good tidings of great joy** which will be **to all people.** **11** For **there is born to you this day** in the city of David a **Savior**, who is **Christ the Lord.** **12** And this *will be* the **sign** to you: You will find a **Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths**, lying in a **manger.**"

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God ...

RESPONSE: Let's GO see!

15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "**Let us now go** to Bethlehem and **see this thing** that has come to pass, which the Lord has **made known** to us." **16** And they came with haste and **found** Mary and Joseph, and the **Babe** lying in a manger. **17** Now when they had **seen Him**, **they made widely known** the saying which was told them concerning this Child. **18** And **all** those who **heard it marveled** at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

#3 The **rabbi** who circumcised him.

Luke 2.21 NKJV And when **eight days were completed for the circumcision** of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

RESPONSE: Not noted...

#4 Simeon & Anna and those in the temple:

Luke 2.25 NKJ And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. **26** And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death **before he had seen** the Lord's Christ. **27** So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, **28** he **took Him up in his arms and blessed God** and said:

29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;

30 For **my eyes have seen Your salvation** "

36 Now there was one, **Anna**, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a **great age**, ... **37** ... served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day. **38** And coming in that instant she **gave thanks** to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

RESPONSE: Recognition & Worship

Then the Magi... *the nations!*

What if the main **Message of Christmas** is the generous Love God has for us? And expresses through us.

What if the main **Challenge of Christmas** is to **see the face of God** in a human being? No matter how distressing the disguise?

John 14.9 *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.*

The ***Christmas Cycle*** is the annual reminder that the World is not lost in Darkness, but has seen a great light.

Every year we are reminded that it is not religion, but redemption that has the final word.

It's all GIFT. It's all FAVOR – His Gift to us!

That's why we give GIFTS (we are Children of God)

That's why we SING!

1 Joy to the World, the Lord is Come!

Let earth receive her King!

Let ev'ry heart prepare him room,

And heav'n and nature sing,....

2 Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns!

**IN ALL THE ACTIVITY, SEE HIS FACE, IN THE LEAST,
IN THE UNLIKELY.**

AND SING!