



December Sermon Series: Sounds of the Seasons

Message #1 – The Long-Awaited Night

Pre-Sermon Video: **Silent Night Master**

Getting the Nod

We're starting a Christmas Series entitled, **"Sounds of the Season"** and over the next few weeks we will be exploring some of the most famous Christmas Hymns and Carols and the stories behind them. **Today, the obvious hymn is Silent Night** and the backstory of **an organ in disrepair** and a **2-year-old poem** collecting dust. **Father Joseph Mohr** was in a tight spot with the organ problem and all the music for the Christmas Eve service was written for organ. So, Mohr went to the organist and friend, **Franz Gruber** and together they put music to the 2-year-old poem... and the rest is history.

The story of this Christmas carol is one of how God provided in an amazing and unusual way to meet a pressing need. It is a beautiful illustration of God's provision for us through Christ. Surely God has provided in an amazing and unusual way to meet our need of salvation.

Just as the meeting of the urgent need of that Christmas eve service resulted in a new song, Christ's provision for our salvation results in a new song, which the Bible says only the redeemed can sing... NKJV | Re 14:3 **They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.**

Transition: The hymn Silent Night is about Christ's provision for our salvation and how it came about through His sacrifice, which Paul speaks about in 2 Corinthians 8:9...

NKJV | 2 Co 8:9 **For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.**

Connecting Us

Illustration of the Rich Man and a Penny: A rich man was observed by friends to repeatedly pick up any penny he found on the street. It could be a shiny and new penny or a dull and dingy one. For the rich man, finding a penny was a high priority in his day. Furthermore, friends noticed the rich man was joyful with each new find. He seemed to cherish each penny found as much as his millions in investments.

Finally, curiosity ran its course and a friend asked the rich man: "You are rich beyond measure, why do you stop whatever you are doing or wherever you are to pick up a penny? Why would a man with your wealth care so much about a single penny?"

The rich man replied, "Each penny found reminds me of my true worth as a person. Many people during my life viewed me much like a penny. I was often discarded, passed by, left in the change tray or seen as having little value. Then, one day a Great Man found me feeling worthless and isolated. Unlike others, he viewed me differently. He saw in me great worth and potential. I truly sensed this man cared for me and was telling me the truth. This man took my worthlessness and made me worthy again. Each penny has this Great Man's name engraved on it, "In God We Trust."

Application: The penny serves as a constant reminder during my day that my true worth is not in riches but in the One who made me rich. You see my value is not in my possessions but in the One who possesses me.

Transition: The message of Silent Night is about the One who truly makes us eternally rich and Who possesses me life and soul! Has He made you rich?

God's Take from Scripture

NKJV | Lk 2:6-7 **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 clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.**

What Happened That Silent Night?

1. The world heard the cry of the greatest need being met.

- **It was the infant cry of God in flesh...** it was Christ that came into this world to pay the price for our sins. It was a decision settled long before that day in Bethlehem. (Revelation 13:8 says Christ was slain from the foundation of the world.)
- **The sacrifice of Christ for our salvation was not an accident of history**, but a predetermined plan of heaven.
- **The cry of Bethlehem's Child finally drowned out Beelzebub's curse!** The world's greatest need has always been the curse of sin. **But He entered our world to meet the need of our souls...**
- **Illustration of the Manila Dump Missionaries:** Author and pastor Leith Anderson writes: Several years ago I was visiting Manila and was taken, of all places, to the Manila garbage dump and saw something beyond belief. Tens of thousands of people make their homes on that dump site. They've constructed shacks out of the things other people have thrown away. And they send their children out early every morning to scavenge for food out of other people's garbage, so they can have family meals. People have been born and grown up there on the garbage dump. They have had their families, their children, their shacks, their garbage to eat, finished out their lives, and died there without ever going anywhere else, even in the city of Manila. It is an astonishing thing.
- **The Rest of the Story:** **But Americans also live on the garbage dump.** They are missionaries, Christians who have chosen to leave their own country and communicate the love of Jesus Christ to people who otherwise would never hear it. That is amazing to me. That people would leave what they have to go and live on a garbage dump. **Why? To go where the need is.**
- That's amazing, but not as amazing as the journey that Jesus made from heaven to earth.

2. The world was introduced to a willing sacrifice.

- Paul, in 2 Corinthians 8:9, speaks of Christ's sacrifice for us, uses the word "grace" - **"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."** The classic definition of "grace," is **"unmerited favor or blessing."**
- Certainly, when it comes to Christ's sacrifice for our sakes to experience of God's forgiveness... such favor, such blessing, is unmerited.

- **Illustration of Robert E. Lee and the Young Soldier:** During the Civil War, a young man was brought before Robert E. Lee for an infraction of the rules. Can you imagine being brought before the commander of all the Confederate forces for having broken the rules? The young man was trembling. "You need not be afraid; you'll get justice here," said Lee. "I know it," the young man replied. "That's what I'm scared of."
- **Application:** We will stand one day before the Supreme Judge of the universe. We, too, are guilty of having broken the rules. Therefore, I will be eternally grateful that, on that day, because of Jesus' willing sacrifice and my acceptance of that sacrifice, I will not receive justice but mercy.
- **The Bible tells us that we are all sinners** (Romans 3:23), and as such, we are **under condemnation of eternal death** (Romans 6:23a); **but through Christ, God has made available the "gift of eternal life"** (Romans 6:23b).
- This provision of eternal life was made through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for our sakes, which the Bible says He willingly chose to make, despite the fact that we were undeserving!
- **Illustration on Remembering D-Day:** On a television special that aired on June 6, 1994, observing the D-Day invasion. General Norman Schwarzkopf and Dan Rather were walking through the U.S. cemetery at Normandy. As they did, **Schwarzkopf said that in light of the sacrifice of these men, we should live to make this world worth dying for.**
- **Jesus, because He was willing, faced His D-Day, though a far different one and for a far different reason.** He came not to make this world worth dying for, but to make life worth living for Him!

3. The world received heaven's gift.

- Indeed, at the birth of Christ, "Glories did stream from heaven afar." The glory of God was brought down to man in human form.
- NLT | Jn 1:14 So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.
- **Illustration of the crippled puppy who was understood:** A young boy went into a pet shop to look for a puppy. The owner showed the boy a litter of puppies in a box at the back of the store. After a couple of minutes, he went back to the owner and said, "I've picked one out. How much will it cost?" The owner gave him the price and the boy promised to return in a few days with the money. The owner said, "Don't take too long. Puppies sell quickly." The boy replied, "I'm not worried. Mine will still be here."
- **The boy worked hard and saved his money.** When he had enough, he returned to the store. He went up to the counter and presented the store owner with a wad of bills. The owner patiently counted out the money and told the boy, "All right, you can go get your puppy." The boy reached in and pulled out a skinny little dog with a limp leg and started to leave. **The owner said, "You don't have to take that puppy, son. He's crippled. He can't play. He'll never run with you. He can't fetch. Take one of the healthy pups."** The boy turned around and said, "No thank you, sir. This is exactly the kind of dog I've been looking for." **And as the boy turned to leave, the owner suddenly understood. Extending out from the bottom of the boys pants was a brace for his leg. The boy knew how the puppy felt and rescued it.**

- **Application:** Jesus knows how we feel. He became one of us. And as one of us, yet without sin, he was able to rescue us. Yes, the willingness of God to take on human in the person of Christ is a wondrous thought!

4. The world was changed forever.

- Literally, the birth... death... and resurrection of Jesus has changed the world.
- We have hospitals today because they began by the influence of the Church.
- We have compassion ministries all over the world because of God's influence.
- Hearts and lives have been transformed because of God's sacrifice on the Cross!!!
- **Another definition of "grace," is "God's Riches At Christ's Expense"** - all that God is free to do for us, in us and through us because of Christ's sacrifice for us.
- It is because of the sacrifice of Christ, that I can have available to me the wealth of God to enable me to live a changed life!
- **By the way... We don't have to be good, in order to receive the blessings of God's grace. It's because of the blessings of God's grace, that we can be good!**
- We don't have to change, grow and be good to be loved by God. We are loved so that we can change, grow and be good.
- **"Jesus, like any good fisherman, first catches His fish, then cleans them."**

Transition:

So, What Now?

Quote by Gloria Gaither: "And still today, after two thousand years, patiently, lovingly, Christ is reaching out to us today." Have you received Christ as your personal Savior?

Transition:

Drawing the Net

Illustration of James Butler Bonham: Near the main entrance to the Alamo there is a portrait with the inscription: "James Butler Bonham – even though there is no portrait of him that exists. **This is a portrait of his nephew, Major James Bonham,** deceased, who greatly resembled his uncle. It is placed here by the family so that people may know the appearance of the man who died for freedom."

May we, who have discovered the grace of God, live the changed life Christ died to give us, so that others might see His likeness and come to know the One Who died for their freedom!