

The First Christmas Carol  
December 23, 2001

If you look at the bottom of the pages in the song book, you see various bits of information. First, on the left, you will see the name of the author of the lyrics. It will give the author's year of birth, and if the author has died, the year of death. Then it lists the years for the author of the tune. At the bottom center it gives copyright information, if the song or arrangement is still in copyright. If you look at the Christmas Carols that we sing, you see that some of them are quite old. A few list no names for author as they are so old that no one knows who produced them, only what country they originated from. The earliest with author listed is Joy to the World. The words are by Isaac Watts, who died in 1748.

This morning we want to look at the first Christmas carol. This one is in not in the song book. Rather, it is in the Bible, in Luke 2.

**Luke 2:1-20 (NIV)** In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

I know, it doesn't say they were singing this message. But that's the way I've always pictured it. Who knows, if there was no music, maybe they rapped it out. Anyway, let's look at what they were saying. It is the words that count, not whether or not there was music.

**Luke 2:14 (NIV)**

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Whatever method they used, they were worshipping God. The angels were declaring their praise of God. They gave glory to God.

Do you know what glory is? We sing that a lot, "glory to God". But do you know what it means? What is a person's glory?

The Biblical word that we translate as **glory has its roots in the idea of weight**. To give glory is to give weight to someone. If someone is weighty in your life it doesn't mean they are big in size. It means they are big in importance. In-other-words, to give glory is to show how important someone is to you.

Jesus is very important to me. He is my creator. He is my boss. He is the boss of my life and of my ministry as a pastor and preacher. He is my savior, having died for my sins. He has rescued me from the folly of my own foolish actions. He is my life-giver, having brought me forgiveness of sins and given me eternal life. He is everything to me. I would not exist were it not for Him. I would be lost in hell if it were not for Him. No one else has had such an impact on my life.

Jesus is very important to me. And when I tell people about Jesus, it becomes obvious that He is important to me. He isn't just important because He died on the cross, though that is central. He is important for what He does every day in my life. His presence with me is important to me. His messages to me are important to me. His will for me is important to me.

The more wrapped up my life becomes with Jesus, the more important He is, and the more glory He receives in my life. He receives glory as I pray, giving Him praise and thanks. He receives glory as I re-commit my life, my day to Him. He receives glory as I obey Him. And when I tell people about Him, it increases His glory in THEIR eyes. This is why we are told to tell others about Him.

**1 Chronicles 16:24 (NIV)**

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

(Psalm 9:1; 40:5; 66:16; 78:4; 105:2)

One aspect of Glory is fame. As we declare what God has done, His fame becomes greater. And that means glory for Him. Fame brings glory. It is like getting that Super Bowl ring and wearing it on your finger. That's glory for you. If you get a congressional medal of honor, that's glory for you. When your YouTube video goes viral, that's glory for you. When your tweet is re-tweeted ten thousand times, that's glory for you. If you get your picture on the cover of TIME magazine as person of the year, that's glory for you.

No one knows better than the angels how God is worthy of MUCH glory. When the angels saw God's plan for bringing mankind a savior, they burst upon the scene praising God. We know the first angel was sent by God. The word angel means, literally,

messenger. It is a very generic word. We know the first angel was sent by God to the shepherds with the message that the savior had been born.

Were the others sent also? I think they were watching and listening to hear the message of the sent angel. I think it was news to them that night also. Maybe when they heard that the savior had been born, they broke out in spontaneous praise of God, giving Him glory, not for the shepherds benefit, but from their own hearts to God. Just as others may hear when we give God glory, so the shepherds heard when the angels gave God glory.

The angels announced to the universe, both on earth, and to the highest heavens, the glory of God. They desired God to be glorified everywhere. The phrase "in the highest" most probably refers to the heavens. They wanted God to be glorified everywhere, in heaven among all their fellow angels, the seraphim, and the cherubim who reside in heaven. The angels also wanted God to be glorified on earth. God was showing His favor to men who needed rescuing. God was sending men a savior and the angels in spontaneous joy brought glory to God.

The angels were saying, "Take note of God. He is somebody. He is the highest on earth and in heaven. Give Him glory!"

Almost every Christmas carol we sing mentions the angel and his announcement of a savior and/or the angels singing glory to God. Almost every Christmas carol we sing mentions this first Christmas carol.

That is because it isn't just angels who can and should give glory to God. We too can and should give glory to God. God deserves glory from us for all He has done for us. This morning you can give God glory.

Give glory to God by thinking of what He has done for you, what He has promised you.

Give glory to God by learning more of what He had done for you, what He has promised you. Read the New Testament this year looking for promises. Make a list of the specific things God has promised to you in Jesus Christ.

Give glory to God by telling others about God.

Give glory to God by singing His praises.

Give glory to God by publicly worshipping Him.

Give glory to God in your daily prayers. Sometimes angels, and even demons are watching you. So, speak your praises aloud, if only in a soft whisper, to bring God glory to them.

Give glory to God as you humble yourself before Him.

But the most important way to bring glory to God, the one that does it more than anything is this.

**The most important way to give glory to God is to live in submission to Him.**

Remember that giving God glory means expressing to Him how important He is to you. You live what is important to you. If God is important to you, you will live in submission to Him.

You live what is important to you. If God is important to you, you will live in submission to Him. The other ways complement this way. They don't replace this way. If He is important to you, you will live in submission to Him. You live what is important to you.

You might know that exercise is good for you, but if you don't do it, it isn't important to you. You might know that taking your medicine is good for you, but if you don't do it, it isn't important to you. You might know that driving the speed limit is safer, but if you don't do it, it isn't important to you. You might know that getting to bed earlier is healthy, but if you don't do it, it isn't important to you. You might know that reading your Bible is good for you, but if you don't do it, it isn't important to you. You might know that God should be the center of your life, but if you don't live in submission to Him, He isn't important to you.

You live what is important to you. If God is important to you, you will live in submission to Him. The most important way to give glory to God is to live in submission to Him. Nothing glorifies Him better or more than this. And if you don't care about bringing Him glory, then He isn't important to you. And if God isn't important to you, how can you call yourself a Christian?

If God isn't important to you, you aren't taking your sins seriously.  
If God isn't important to you, you aren't taking justice seriously.  
If God isn't important to you, you aren't taking Jesus seriously. You aren't taking the cross seriously. You aren't taking the good news seriously.

God takes our sin very seriously. God takes our need of forgiveness very seriously. That is why God provided us a Savior: Jesus. Today, won't you believe He is the Savior you need and receive Him as your Savior, turning your life over to Him as your Lord?

Christian, is God convicting you this morning of some sin you are holding onto, some sin that you are not taking seriously enough to repent of? Give it up this morning. Give it up for Jesus.