

The Angel's Christmas Song

C. H. Spurgeon

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men.”—Luke 2:14

It is superstitious to worship angels; it is but proper to love them. Although it would be a high sin, and an act of misdemeanor against the Sovereign Court of Heaven to pay the slightest adoration to the mightiest angel, yet it would be unkind and unseemly, if we did not give to holy angels a place in our heart's warmest love. In fact, he that contemplates the character of angels, and marks their many deeds of sympathy with men, and kindness towards them, cannot resist the impulse of his nature—the impulse of love towards them. The one incident in angelic history, to which our text refers, is enough to weld our hearts to them forever. How free from envy the angels were! Christ did not come from heaven to save their peers when the fell. When Satan, the mighty angel, dragged with him a third part of the stars of heaven, Christ did not stoop from his throne to die for them; but he left them to be reserved in chains and darkness until the last great day. Yet angels did not envy men. Though they remembered that he took not up angels, yet they did not murmur when he took up the seed of Abraham; and though the blessed Master had never condescended to take the angels form, they did not think it beneath them to express their joy when they found him arrayed in the body of an infant.

They *sang* the story out, for they could not tell it in heavy prose. They sang, “Glory to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men.” Methinks, they sang it with gladness in their eyes; with their hearts burning with love, and with breasts as full of joy as if the good news to man had been good news to themselves. And, verily, it was good news to them, for the heart of sympathy makes good news to others, good news to itself! Do you not love the angels? Ye will not bow before them, and there ye are right; but will ye not love them?

The angels sang something which men could understand—something which men ought to understand—something which will make men much better if they will understand it. The angels were singing about Jesus who was born in the manger. We must look upon their song as being built upon this foundation. They sang of Christ and the salvation which he came into this world to work out. And what they said of this salvation was this: they said, first, that it gave glory to God; secondly, that it gave peace to man; and, thirdly, that it was a token of God's good will towards the human race.

1. First, they said that this salvation gave glory to God.

They had been present on many august occasions, and they had joined in many a solemn chorus to the praise of their Almighty Creator. They were present at the creation: “The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” They had seen many a planet fashioned between the palms of Jehovah, and wheeled by his eternal hands through the infinitude of space. They had sung solemn songs over many a world which the Great One had created.

I doubt not, too, that their songs had gathered force through ages. As when first created, their first breath was song, so when they saw God create new worlds, then their song received another note; they rose a little higher in the gamut of adoration. But this time, when they saw God stoop from his throne, and become a babe, hanging upon a woman's breast, they lifted their notes higher still; and reaching to the uttermost stretch of angelic music, they gained the highest notes of the divine scale of praise, and they sung, “Glory to God *in the highest*,” for higher in goodness they felt God could not go. *Thus their highest praise they gave to him in the highest act of his godhead.*

“Angels, from the realms of glory, Wing your downward flight to earth,
Ye who sing creation’s story, Now proclaim Messiah’s birth;
Come and worship, Worship Christ, the new-born King.”

Ay, there is no mortal that can ever dream how magnificent was that song. Then, note, if angels shouted before and when the world was made, their hallelujahs were more full, more strong, more magnificent, if not more hearty, when they saw Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary to be man’s redeemer—“Glory to God in the highest.”

What is the instructive lesson to be learned from this first syllable of the angels’ song? Why this, *that salvation is God’s highest glory*. He is glorified in every dewdrop that twinkles to the morning sun. God is glorified in every bird that warbles on the spray; in every lamb that skips the mead. From the tiny minnow to the huge Leviathan, do not all creatures that swim the water bless and praise his name? Do not all created things extol him? Is there aught beneath the sky, save man, that doth not glorify God? Do not the stars exalt him, when they write his name upon the azure of heaven in their golden letters? Do not the lightnings adore him when they flash his brightness in arrows of light piercing the midnight darkness? Do not thunders extol him when they roll like drums in the march of the God of armies? Do not all things exalt him, from the least even to the greatest? But sing, sing, oh universe, till thou hast exhausted thyself, thou canst not afford a song so sweet as the song of Incarnation. Though creation may be a majestic organ of praise, it cannot reach the compass of the golden canticle—Incarnation! There is more in that than in creation, more melody in Jesus in the manger, than there is in worlds on worlds rolling their grandeur round the throne of the Most High.

2. When they had sung this, they sang what they had never song before.

“Glory to God in the highest,” was an old, old song; they had sung that from before the foundations of the world. But, now, they sang as it were a new song before the throne of God: for they added this stanza—”on, earth, *peace*.” They did not sing that in the garden. There was peace there, but it seemed a thing of course, and scarce worth singing of. There was more than peace there; for there was glory to God there. But, now, man had fallen, and since the day when cherubim with fiery swords drove out the man, there had been no peace on earth, save in the breast of some believers, who had obtained peace from the living fountain of this incarnation of Christ.

Do you not feel my brethren, that the gospel of God is peace to man? Where else can peace be found, but in the message of Jesus? Go legalist, work for peace with toil and pain, and thou shalt never find it. Go, thou, that trustest in the law: go thou, to Sinai; look to the flames that Moses saw, and shrink, and tremble, and despair; for peace is nowhere to be found, but in him, of whom it is said, “This man shall be peace.” And what a peace it is, beloved! It is peace like a river, and righteousness like the waves of the sea. It is the peace of God that passeth all understanding, which keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. This sacred peace between the pardoned soul and God the pardoner; *this marvelous at-one-ment* between the sinner and his judge, this was it that the angels sung when they said, “Peace On earth.”

3. And, then, they wisely ended their song with a third note. They said, “Good will to man.”

Philosophers have said that God has a good will toward man; but I never knew any man who derived much comfort from their philosophical assertion. Wise men have thought from what we

have seen in creation that God had much good will toward man, or else his works would never have been so constructed for their comfort; but I never heard of any man who could risk his soul's peace upon such a faint hope as that. But I have not only heard of thousands, but I know them, who are quite sure that God has a good will towards men; and if you ask their reason, they will give a full and perfect answer. They say, he has good will toward man for he gave his Son. No greater proof of kindness between the Creator and his subjects can possibly be afforded than when the Creator gives his only begotten and well beloved Son to die.

So good a will moreover that he has even condescended to say, "Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." And if you say, "Lord, how shall I know that thou hast this good will towards me," he points to yonder manger, and says, "Sinner, if I had not a good will towards thee, would I have parted with my Son? If I had not good will towards the human race, would I have given up my Son to become one of that race that he might by so doing redeem them from death? He has good will to men; he is willing to pardon; he passes by iniquity, transgression, and sin.

And when the Lord Jesus has become your peace, remember, there is another thing, *good will towards men*. Do not try to keep Christmas without keeping good will towards men. If you are men of wealth, you have poor in your neighborhood. Find something wherewith to clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, and make glad the mourner. Remember, it is good will towards men. Try, if you can, to show them goodwill at this special season; and if you will do that, the poor will say with me, that indeed they wish there were six Christmases in the year.

You are going home to your father and mother, young men; many of you are going from your shops to your homes. You remember what I preached on last Christmas time. Go home to thy friends, and tell them what the Lord hath done for thy soul, and that will make a blessed round of stories at the Christmas fire. If you will each of you tell your parents how the Lord met with you in the house of prayer; how, when you left home, you were a gay, wild blade, but have now come back to love your mother's God, and read your father's Bible. Oh, what a happy Christmas that will make!

What more shall I say? May God give you peace with yourselves; may he give you good will towards all your friends, your enemies, and your neighbors; and may he give you grace to give glory to God in the highest. I will say no more, except at the close of this sermon to wish every one of you, when the day shall come, the happiest Christmas you ever had in your lives.

This is an edited excerpt from a sermon preached by Spurgeon on December 20, 1857.