

## **Twas the night before Christmas by Angie Mosteller**

Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the earth,  
Every creature was stirring, awaiting a birth.  
The time for Messiah was certainly near,  
The prophets foretold it; the Bible was clear.

From the book of beginnings, the very first sin,  
God's word made it clear how His grace entered in.  
Born of a virgin, He'd come as a man.  
The Creator among us, the time was at hand.

The stars were arranged to show marvelous things,  
Setting Wise Men to journey and find the true King.  
Shepherds in Bethlehem gazed on the sky,  
Longing to see him, their Lord the Most High.

How could they know that the very next night  
An angel of God would speak words of delight?  
How the Savior was born, it was news of great joy.  
In a cloth and a manger they'd find the dear boy.

And a heavenly host would soon join to sing  
Of the glory of God and of wonderful things.  
He entered creation, set position aside  
To show us how deeply his love did abide.

Sin sent us away from our almighty Lord.  
He became one of us that we might be restored.  
He's the Prince of our Peace; He's the one who makes whole.  
He is Wisdom Incarnate, a Shepherd of Souls.

He's the Author of Life; He's the Ruler of All.  
He can offer salvation, if on His name we call.  
The shepherds and Wise Men would bow to adore  
Holy God among men, our greatest reward.

All glory and honor is due to this King.  
Let all join in worship; let every tongue sing.  
Jesus is Lord, all creation proclaims.  
He's the first and last, He is always the same.

History turned on the first Christmas day,  
When God became man in a humble display.  
As we think of the manger in which He was laid,  
Let our hearts welcome Him to the world He made!

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Silent Night: Christmas Eve Service

**Show video - [skitguys.com](http://skitguys.com)**

The great Christmas Hymn "Silent Night" was written in 1816 by a young priest in Austria, Joseph Mohr. Austria had just gone through a tumultuous time with the Napoleonic wars. As the story goes, the priest went for a walk, and as he looked out over a very quiet, winter-laden town, he was inspired by the beauty of the white snow and the silence it carried with it.

He literally experienced a "silent night," a "holy night" and wrote the hymn.

And as we gather together this Christmas Eve, maybe your life has been tumultuous. If not tumultuous, I'm fairly certain if it's been any thing like mine, it has at least been busy and quite possibly chaotic. No doubt, our world seems to become more and more tumultuous by the minute.

But in spite of all of that, today, I want us to do our best to experience the silence and the holiness that is found in the presence of God. Scripture tells us to be still and know that I am God. So, once again, tonight as we gather I want us to experience the silence and the holiness that is found in the presence of God.

To do that, let's reflect on the comforting words of a Psalm written some 700 years before Christ was born in a manger, Psalm 46.

Psalm 46:1 (NIV): God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

This is what we celebrate this Christmas and every Christmas. When we were helpless and weak, God showed up in a way that surprised many, but that we could relate to. He showed up as a baby in a manger helpless and weak. However, that baby was also our refuge and strength.

That term "ever-present" I love that because it reminds us that while God became physically present in Jesus Christ on that first Christmas, it also reminds us that he would not just be present for just a time. No, that baby would grow up and say, "I am with you always." He is present tonight, He will be present tomorrow, He is present all the time.

Jesus is the "ever-present." He is the best Christmas present ever and the gift that keeps on giving. He gives us an abundant life, an eternal life.

The Psalm goes on to say:

Psalm 46:2–3 (NIV): Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

If this beautiful gift of Jesus, that ever presence of God, provides refuge, strength, and help in troubled times, we need not fear!

Truth is too much of our lives are lived in fear.

However, time and again, we hear the voice of the angels say, “ Fear not” not just in our Christmas stories, but all throughout the Scriptures.

And the Psalmist reminds us not to fear about anything. “Though the earth gives way, the mountains fall, the waters roar ” That would be a bit scary if those things were to happen.

But it’s saying in essence, even if you feel your world is falling apart, choose not to fear. Why? Because the whole story of Christmas is that God is with us! He is Emmanuel.

Peter tells us to cast all our anxieties on Him why? Because He cares for us.

Psalm 46 continues and draws a picture of what God being with us is like:

Psalm 46:4–6 (NIV): There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. 5 God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. 6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

I have at times just gone and sat by a river. Sitting beside a river can be so soothing. Studies have even shown that running water has a stress-reducing effect that is not found in music or silence. Ok, it can also cause you to run to the bathroom, but I digress.

The river in this verse is a metaphor for God's strength, peace, hope and refreshment that only God can provide. At the same time, the strong current of a river is powerful.

This illustration is a beautiful picture of the power and peace that only God provides. A peace that passes all understanding. A peace even in the midst of a strong current.

Psalm 46:7–9 (NIV): The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. 8 Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

There's that phrase once again: The Lord is with us.

In the Christmas story recorded in Matthew, we are reminded that Isaiah prophesied, "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel." That name Emmanuel means "God with us."

The same God who created the world and put us in the garden with him never stopped wanting to be with us.

In his great plan, he would come and not only be with us but also in us. The same Spirit that was in Jesus is also inside of us who believe.

And Christ came to save us from our sins and ourselves so that we could be together forever with Him. So that we could experience Him, be transformed by His love, be conformed into His image.

He is mighty. He is all powerful. He has brought desolation to the earth and he has made wars cease. The all mighty, powerful God is a God of peace.

And Paul told the church in Philippi and tells us today. . .

Philippians 4:6–7 (NLT): Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

The same peace the angels mention to the shepherds when they cried out, "Peace on earth, good will to all." That is the same peace he has for you and me. We can find peace in the midst of every storm. No need to fear because perfect love cast out all fear.

So why would we be reading a Psalm that was written some 700 years before Christ was born in the manger? Is there a prophecy in it? Does it somehow mention the coming Messiah? No, not at all.

But remember, we are looking for the silence and holiness that is found in the presence of God. The "mighty river" God. The "ever-present" God. The "fortress God" The God who "makes wars cease" The God we find in Psalm 46.

You see, the Psalmist was not just bragging about God; he was leading us somewhere. To a place of peace and holiness.

Look closely at the end of this Psalm:

Psalm 46:10–11 (NIV): He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” 11 The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

The psalmist is now quoting the Lord himself.

Can you hear him? . . . “Be still”

Oh, how we want to. We want to be still. But there is so much to do. Life is chaotic. Our world is tumultuous.

And maybe your thinking, “Be still? I’m lucky not to fall out of the boat!”

Well here’s the Good news! That baby in the manger would grow up and find himself with a group of fishermen in a tumultuous, chaotic storm.

And what did he do? Panic and fear. No! He stood to his feet, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Be still!” And the storm listened.

How do we experience a “silent” and “ holy” night? We choose to be still.

To be still and know that He is God.

We choose to let go of trying to fix and control everything. We choose to be still as an act of faith. Faith that God is God and I don’t have to be. We choose to be still for a moment, and instead of worrying about the world, we trust that God will be exalted among the nations.

God will be exalted in the earth. And we remember, “The Lord Almighty is with us!”

Tonight, as we celebrate the birth of Christ, we are reminded that He is our refuge. Just as the psalmist encourages us to “be still and know that I am God,” let us take a moment to pause, reflect, and embrace the tranquility that comes from trusting in His divine plan.

In the midst of our celebrations, we can find solace in knowing that God is with us, guiding us through every storm.

Let's a minute and just air in the silence and then listen to this song as we light our candles.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. May this Christmas Eve fill our hearts with peace, joy, and the assurance that we are never alone.

## **Candlelight portion**

Jesus came to bring the presence of God into our world—"Emmanuel . . . God with us" —so too we are called to bring His presence into our world.

This Christmas, when our lives reflect the God who lives in us, we can be different from the world, and that difference can bless others with the transforming presence of His love and grace.

Listen I know sometimes it may not look like God is with us, but you need to understand no matter what you are going through, no matter what may be happening around you, God is with you. And just a whisper of his name is enough to grab His attention.

Luke 2:7 (NIV): and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Think about that, no room for the Savior of the world. I realize that many were unaware of who this baby was, but the fact is even today, so many still have no room.

But Jesus longs for us to make room. And He is always be available to us.

John 8:12 (TPT) - Then Jesus said, "I am light to the world and those who embrace me will experience life-giving light, and they will never walk in darkness."

Then in Matthew Jesus tells us that we are the light

So what is light, many would say it is the absence of darkness. But that is not entirely true I think it is more accurately to say light reveals what was hidden in the dark.

Have you ever lost something at night and tried to find it. No flashlight, no candle, no lamp, just utter darkness and you have to try and locate what you lost. Difficult isn't it. Talk about hitch keys.

John 1:5 (NLT) - 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

So shine your light. Be a witness of his grace, shine our light to a world around us so that they too can experience the goodness of God. That they too can taste and see that the Lord is good.

### **Communion portion of service**

When the busy and slightly mad end of the year rush begins, and we start working ourselves up into a frantic state, a sobering thought to remind ourselves with, is that Jesus did not ever ask us to remember his birth in any special way. Oh I'm well aware that we've just spent several weeks sharing, remembering that very thing.

But the truth is, He didn't ask us to spend hundreds of dollars trying to buy gifts up to some standard. It didn't tell us to bring our gold, frankincense and myrrh. But he did ask us to remember his death. And so tonight we celebrate communion to remember his death till he comes again.

I realize this is Christmas and I also know that His birth held a lot of promise, and again we have talked about some of those, and many prophecies were fulfilled by his birth. Many prophecies were also fulfilled by his death, and it was with his death, not His birth that the power of sin and death were broken.

Romans 6:10 says, "He died to defeat the power of sin."

At Christmas people give gifts to each other, but Jesus gave us the best gift of all. A free gift available to all. It's a gift we need to accept for ourselves, unwrap, and partake of.



It has to be our choice to accept the gift of his life. We don't need to chase around finding the best gift, or the best deal, God has already arranged it. There's no need for a late night, last minute dash to find the best gift of all. This is the best gift of all. And it comes to us faster than Amazon Prime.

There's no need to worry if it will suit the person, it always does, it's a perfect gift. The only one that brings the peace of God into our lives.

**So why did he come? Show video spoken word.**

With that let me read from 1 Corinthians as we ready ourselves for the communion.

1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (NIV) - <sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

**Prayer:** Thank you Father for you arranged for us the perfect gift. We thank you for the gift of Jesus. Because of that gift we can have life, abundant life, and we thank you for the freedom we have in you. We thank you for the grace that sustains us, the mercy that covers us, the love shown to us, and the blood that was shed for us, which heals us, and we are grateful for Your Light that guides us.

**Communion**