

SONGS OF CHRISTMAS

12 Carols That Tell the
Story of Our Savior

KHCB

™

A Letter to the Reader

Dear Reader,

After many years in Christian radio, I've come to believe something deeply: music has a way of staying with us long after the song ends.

A single melody can carry you back to a childhood Christmas. I remember our family spontaneously singing Silent Night one Christmas Eve after dinner. Sometimes, when I hear that carol, it takes me back to that sweet and unrehearsed moment together.

During this season, a lyric can rise up in your heart at just the right moment and the right song, at the right time, can remind you of the hope we have in Christ.

That's what this new devotional from KHCB is all about: ***Songs of Christmas: 12 Carols That Tell the Story of Our Savior***.

It's a chance to slow down and listen again, not just to the music but to the truth behind it.

Each day, we'll look at one of the season's most beloved carols. Some are favorites shared by our own KHCB staff. Others may be ones you've sung for years. But all of them point us back to the heart of Christmas: the coming of Christ, our Savior and King.

My prayer is that as you read, reflect, and worship, these songs will **draw you closer** to the Lord this Christmas. Let them fill your heart with peace. Let the Scriptures speak fresh hope over your life. And may the joy of Jesus be the song you carry into this season and beyond.

I pray you'll be encouraged by this devotional during this special time of year and that you'll have a very Merry Christmas.

With gratitude and joy,
Scott Krus
President, KHCB Media Group

Day 1: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

God is with us in the waiting, and He always comes through.

Key Lyric to Reflect On

*“O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.”*

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

Matthew 1:18–23

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

And Joseph, her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.

But when he had thought this over, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

And she will give birth to a Son, and you shall name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Now all this took place so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled:

“Behold, the virgin will be with child and give birth to a Son, and they shall name Him Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.”

Songs of Christmas: 12 Carols That Tell the Story of Our Savior

Devotional Reflection

We begin where all good stories begin. Not with resolution, but with longing. “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” gives voice to the ache of a people waiting for rescue. It echoes with the cry of centuries, pleading for God to come near and make things right.

The people of Israel waited for a Messiah, a Redeemer, a Deliverer. And though they didn’t yet know His name, they knew their only hope was for God to dwell with them once again.

And then He came.

Not in thunder or smoke, but in the womb of a virgin. Born into the noise and need of the world, Jesus entered not as a warrior, but as a child. And He was called Immanuel.

God with us.

That promise isn’t just for Israel. It’s for you today, too. If you are waiting, weary, or walking through unknowns, God is not far. He is with you not metaphorically or symbolically, but fully.

He came once to save. He is with us now to sustain. And one day soon, He will come again to reign.

So even in the waiting, we worship. Even in the unknown, we rejoice.

Day 2: It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Christ didn't come to escape the brokenness of the world. He came to bring peace in the middle of it.

Lyric to Reflect On

*“Peace on the earth, good will to men,
From heaven’s all-gracious King.
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.”*

Scripture Reading

Luke 2:8–14

In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock at night.

And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood near them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.

And so the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.

For today in the city of David a Savior has been born for you, who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army of angels praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among people with whom He is pleased.”

Songs of Christmas: 12 Carols That Tell the Story of Our Savior

Devotional Reflection

The night was still. The shepherds were likely cold, tired, and unaware that the greatest announcement in history was about to unfold above their heads.

Then, without warning, the sky filled with light. Angels appeared with a message that changed everything.

Peace.

“It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” invites us to hear that angelic song again. Not just as a moment in history, but as a message for today.

Written in the mid-1800s by a pastor named Edmund Sears, this carol speaks into the ache of a weary world. Its lyrics were penned during a season of personal struggle and national unrest. And still, it clings to the hope of heaven’s peace. The angels weren’t announcing a temporary feeling. They were declaring the arrival of a Person.

Jesus came to bring peace between God and man. He came to settle the unrest in our souls. To quiet fear. To meet us in our sorrow.

That kind of peace is still available. Right now. Even in the middle of everything that feels loud, unsettled, or uncertain.

This carol reminds us that the world may grow weary, but the song of the angels still rings true. Christ has come. Peace is here.

Day 3: I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

When peace feels far away, we cling to what is true: Christ has come, and He has overcome.

Lyric to Reflect On

*“And in despair I bowed my head:
‘There is no peace on earth,’ I said.
‘For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.’”*

Scripture Reading

John 16:33

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

Romans 15:13

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Devotional Reflection

Some Christmas songs sound like joy. Some sound like longing. This one sounds like both.

“I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day” was written during one of the darkest seasons of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s life. His wife had died tragically. His son was seriously wounded in the Civil War. And the world around him seemed as broken as his heart.

It’s not a song that skips to the happy ending. It walks through the despair first. The honesty of it is what makes it ring true.

Many people carry quiet sorrow during the holidays. Old grief. Lingering questions. A heaviness they can’t quite name. And yet the Gospel speaks straight into that pain.

Songs of Christmas: 12 Carols That Tell the Story of Our Savior

This carol reminds us that even when peace *feels* far away, the truth still holds. Christ has come. The Kingdom of God is not shaken. And the promise of ‘peace on earth, good will to men’ is not a dream. It is a declaration.

Longfellow ends his poem not in despair, but in defiant hope:

“Then pealed the bells more loud and deep,
God is not dead, nor doth He sleep.”

You may feel sorrow, but you are not forgotten. The song of Christmas still rises over the noise, still breaks through the ache, and still declares what is true.

Christ has come. He has overcome. And His peace is still for you.

Day 4: O Little Town of Bethlehem

God doesn't need noise or status to move. His greatest work often begins in quiet, surrendered places.

Lyric to Reflect On

*“How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given.
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.”*

Scripture Reading

Micah 5:2

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Too little to be among the clans of Judah,
From you One will come forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.
His times of coming forth are from long ago,
From the days of eternity.”

Luke 2:1–7

Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.

This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Now Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,

in order to register, together with Mary, who was betrothed to him and was pregnant.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth.

And she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Songs of Christmas: 12 Carols That Tell the Story of Our Savior

Devotional Reflection

There is a quietness to Bethlehem that reflects something true about the heart of God.

The Messiah could have been born anywhere. In a palace. In a city of influence. With ceremony and splendor. But instead, the Savior came into a forgotten town, during a government census, in the middle of the night.

It wasn't random. It was prophesied.

God had always planned to bring salvation through what the world would overlook.

Long before Mary wrapped Jesus in cloth and laid Him in a manger, the prophet Micah named Bethlehem as the birthplace of a ruler whose origins were "from the days of eternity." A King would come—but not the kind people were expecting.

Phillips Brooks, the pastor who wrote "O Little Town of Bethlehem," visited the town in the 1800s and was struck by how small and unassuming it was. But that's what moved him. The idea that God would enter into such a place—quiet, dusty, almost forgotten—was proof that God doesn't just work through the impressive. He works through the obedient.

Bethlehem reminds us that God moves in quiet places.

He still does.

In the middle of your ordinary routine, God can move. In the quiet ache of your heart, He can speak. When the world is busy and loud, He still enters through the side door—the unnoticed moments, the surrendered prayers, the small acts of faithfulness.

Bethlehem may have been small, but heaven came down there. And if your heart is open, He can do the same today.

Day 5: What Child Is This?

The baby in the manger is the Savior of the world. The wonder of Christmas is not how small He came, but how great He truly is.

Lyric to Reflect On

*“What child is this, who laid to rest
On Mary’s lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?”*

Scripture Reading

Luke 2:15–20

When the angels had departed from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, “Let’s go straight to Bethlehem, then, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

And they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.

When they had seen Him, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.

And all who heard it were amazed about the things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.

And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

Devotional Reflection

There is a kind of awe that comes from seeing something too big to fully understand. That’s what this carol captures. Not just the joy of Christ’s birth, but the mystery of it.

What child is this?

Songs of Christmas: 12 Carols That Tell the Story of Our Savior

The question echoes through the stable in Bethlehem. It hums in the quiet breath of the newborn King. It stands at the center of our faith.

This baby—sleeping in His mother’s arms, wrapped in simple cloth—is the One the angels adore. The One the shepherds rush to find. The One the prophets foretold.

He is both fragile and eternal. Both helpless and holy. Both fully man and fully God.

The author of this hymn, William Chatterton Dix, wrote it after recovering from a near-fatal illness. His brush with death gave him new eyes for the wonder of Christ’s life. He couldn’t stop thinking about the strange glory of the incarnation.

That God would *choose* to come in such humility. That the King of kings would make His entrance through the arms of a young woman and the silence of a Bethlehem night.

We live in a world that rushes past mystery and looks for answers instead of awe. But Christmas invites us to stop and stare a little longer.

To sit beside Mary and wonder.

To join the shepherds and share what we’ve seen.

To ask again: What Child is this?

And then to answer in faith: This, this is Christ the King.

Day 6: Away in a Manger

Jesus came near so you could come close. He is not far from the lowly. He is right where you are.

Lyric to Reflect On

*“Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And take us to heaven to live with Thee there.”*

Matthew 18:2–5

And He called a child to Himself and set him among them, and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you change and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

So whoever will humble himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

And whoever receives one such child in My name, receives Me.”

Luke 2:6–7

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth.

And she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Devotional Reflection

This is one of the simplest carols we sing. And maybe that’s why it lingers.

“Away in a Manger” is often the first Christmas hymn a child learns. The melody is gentle, the imagery quiet, the prayer sincere. It doesn’t try to explain the mystery of Christ’s coming. It simply receives it.

That childlike posture is exactly what Jesus said we need.

In Matthew 18, He tells His disciples that unless we become like children, we will miss the kingdom. That doesn’t mean becoming immature or naive. It means being humble. Trusting. Dependent. Aware of our need.

Songs of Christmas: 12 Carols That Tell the Story of Our Savior

This carol invites us to come to Jesus the way children do—honestly, hopefully, and with our whole hearts.

The manger reminds us that Christ didn't come to impress. He came to dwell among us. To be close. To enter into the real, messy world and bring the nearness of heaven with Him.

It's easy to think of God as distant. High above. Unreachable. But the manger tells a different story. He came low so we could come near.

This hymn's final lines aren't just for children. They're for all who long for the closeness of Christ. "Be near me, Lord Jesus..." That is the truest prayer of Christmas.

And the good news is: He is.

Day 7: Once in Royal David's City

Jesus humbled Himself to walk among us. His story began in the lowest place so we could be lifted to the highest one.

Lyric to Reflect On

*“He came down to earth from heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall.”*

Scripture Reading

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Philippians 2:6–8

Although He existed in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being born in the likeness of men.

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, death on a cross.

Devotional Reflection]

Some Christmas carols invite us to sing. This one invites us to kneel.

“Once in Royal David's City” tells the story of the Savior's birth not just with beauty, but with reverence. It centers our attention on one incredible truth: the Son of God came down in humility.

He could have come as a king, wrapped in robes, welcomed into wealth. Instead, He came as a child. Born to a young girl. Laid in a manger. Raised in quiet.

This was not a mistake. It was mercy.

Songs of Christmas: 12 Carols That Tell the Story of Our Savior

From the moment of His birth, Jesus identified with the lowly, the overlooked, and the ordinary. He did not hold onto heaven's status. He laid it down so He could come close.

This carol reminds us that Jesus was not ashamed of our weakness. He stepped into it. He knows what it is to grow up, to obey, to weep, to wait. The One who holds the universe came down to be held by human hands.

And one day, as the final verse says, all who trust in Him will see Him not in a stable, but in glory.

Until then, we follow this humble King. We walk the way He walked. And we let the quiet of Bethlehem remind us of what greatness truly is.

Day 8: Angels We Have Heard on High

The birth of Jesus demands more than our attention. It invites our praise.

Lyric to Reflect On

*“Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o’er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo!”*

Scripture Reading

Luke 2:13–14

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army of angels praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among people with whom He is pleased.”

Devotional Reflection

Some moments are too full of wonder to stay quiet.

That’s what happened on the night Christ was born. One angel’s announcement wasn’t enough. Suddenly the heavens exploded with praise. A multitude appeared, proclaiming what all of creation had been groaning for:

Glory to God. Peace to people. The Savior has come.

“Angels We Have Heard on High” is a carol of pure joy. There is no sorrow in it, no struggle, no waiting. Just uncontainable praise. It gives us a glimpse of heaven’s response to the arrival of Jesus.

The Latin phrase “Gloria in excelsis Deo” means “Glory to God in the highest.” That line has echoed through churches, choirs, and Christmas services for centuries—but it started in a field. Among sheep. To a group of ordinary men.

God didn’t reveal this moment to the powerful or famous. He revealed it to shepherds. Men with no status, no credentials, and no reason to be chosen—except that God delights in drawing near to the lowly.

Songs of Christmas: 12 Carols That Tell the Story of Our Savior

And when they heard heaven's song, they joined in.

This carol invites us to do the same.

When we see what God has done, when we realize who Jesus truly is, the only right response is worship. Not just on Sunday. Not just on Christmas. But as a way of life.

Glory that big was never meant to be observed. It's meant to be echoed.

Even now, the mountains still reply.

Day 9: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Christmas is more than the birth of a baby. It is the arrival of our Savior and the glory of God made known.

Lyric to Reflect On

*“Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die.
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.”*

Scripture Reading

Philippians 2:5–11

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, as He already existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond-servant and being born in the likeness of men.

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death on a cross.

For this reason also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Devotional Reflection

Some carols are sweet. Some are soft. This one is strong.

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” is one of the richest Christmas hymns ever written. Every verse is filled with truth, each line packed with the message of the Gospel.

We sing of angels rejoicing, but we also sing of God taking on flesh. We sing of peace on earth, but we also declare that Christ was “born to raise the sons of earth.” This is more than a lullaby. It's a proclamation.

Charles Wesley, who wrote the lyrics in the 1700s, was known for his deeply theological hymns. He believed music could be used to teach, to convict, and to lift the eyes of the church toward heaven. This song does all three.

Songs of Christmas: 12 Carols That Tell the Story of Our Savior

Jesus, fully God, laid aside His glory and came near. He was born into our world not just to be with us—but to save us. He lived a sinless life, died in our place, and rose again to offer new life. That's what the angels were announcing. That's what we still celebrate today.

This carol reminds us that Christmas is not the beginning of a feel-good story. It's the arrival of a rescue plan. One that would cost Jesus everything—and give us eternal life.

So we sing with the angels. We echo their anthem. And we marvel again at the Gospel in every verse.

Day 10: O Come, All Ye Faithful

Christmas invites us not just to celebrate, but to come and worship the One who is Christ the Lord.

Lyric to Reflect On

*“O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.*

Scripture Reading

Matthew 2:1–2, 9–11

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,

“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him.”

And behold, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on ahead of them until it came to a stop over the place where the Child was to be found.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

And after they came into the house, they saw the Child with His mother Mary, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Devotional Reflection

There are many responses to Christmas—sentiment, tradition, celebration—but the right response is worship.

“O Come, All Ye Faithful” is a call to adore. It doesn’t just tell us that Christ has come. It invites us to come and see for ourselves.

The same invitation was extended to shepherds in the field and to wise men in the east. From the night of His birth, Jesus drew people in. He wasn’t born in isolation. He was born for revelation—that we might come and behold Him.

Songs of Christmas: 12 Carols That Tell the Story of Our Savior

The chorus of this carol is simple: *O come, let us adore Him.*

It's not complicated. It's not reserved for the religious elite. It's for the faithful and the wandering, the joyful and the weary. Come.

This song stirs us to remember that adoration is more than a feeling—it's an act of the will. It's choosing to look beyond what we can see and fix our eyes on what is true.

Christ has come. Christ is Lord. And we are invited to respond with awe, humility, and joy.

As you move through the busyness of this season, let this carol be your reminder: pause and worship. Not just with your voice, but with your heart, your time, and your attention.

The invitation still stands. Come and adore Him.

Day 11: Joy to the World

The joy of Christmas is not about what has happened around us, but who has come to reign within us.

Lyric to Reflect On

*“Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing.”*

Scripture Reading

Psalm 98:4–9

Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth;
Be cheerful and sing for joy and sing praises.
Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,
With the lyre and the sound of a melody.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
Shout joyfully before the King, the Lord.
May the sea roar and all it contains,
The world, and those who dwell in it.
May the rivers clap their hands,
May the mountains sing together for joy
Before the Lord, for He is coming to judge the earth;
He will judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples with fairness

Devotional Reflection

“Joy to the World” is one of the most well-known Christmas carols in the world—and surprisingly, it was never written as a Christmas carol at all.

When Isaac Watts wrote these lyrics in the 1700s, he was paraphrasing Psalm 98. He wasn’t thinking about a manger. He was thinking about a throne. His hymn looked ahead—not just to Jesus’ birth, but to His return.

But over time, the song became woven into Christmas, because the message is true of both:

The Lord has come. The King is here. Joy is breaking in.

Songs of Christmas: 12 Carols That Tell the Story of Our Savior

This carol is more than celebration. It's declaration. It announces that Christ has entered the story of the world—not to blend in quietly, but to reign in righteousness.

The joy we sing about is not shallow. It's not just emotional or seasonal. It is rooted in the rule of a perfect King. He comes to make His blessings known “far as the curse is found.” That means no part of our brokenness is beyond His reach. No sorrow is outside His healing. No darkness is stronger than His light.

But there's one line in this song that still calls for response:

“Let every heart prepare Him room.”

That's the invitation. It's not just about the world receiving her King. It's about each heart doing the same.

The joy of Christmas isn't automatic. It is offered—but we must receive it. We must make room for the Savior who came, and who will come again.

If there are places in your life where fear or stress or self have taken up space, this is the time to clear them out. Prepare Him room.

Because joy has come. The King is here.

Day 12: Go Tell It on the Mountain

Christmas isn't meant to be kept to ourselves. The Savior has come, and the world needs to know.

Lyric to Reflect On

*“Go tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere;
Go tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born!”*

Scripture Reading

Luke 2:17–20

When they had seen Him, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.

And all who heard it were amazed about the things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.
And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

Romans 10:14–15

How then are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed?
How are they to believe in Him whom they have not heard?
And how are they to hear without a preacher?
But how are they to preach unless they are sent?
Just as it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!”

Devotional Reflection

It's easy to think of Christmas as a quiet story. Silent Night. Stillness. Gentle scenes of a baby asleep in a manger.

But “Go Tell It on the Mountain” reminds us that the birth of Christ was never meant to stay quiet.

Songs of Christmas: 12 Carols That Tell the Story of Our Savior

The shepherds didn't keep what they saw to themselves. After meeting the Savior, they became the first evangelists. They went and told everyone. And the people who heard were amazed.

That's the pattern of the Gospel: God reveals, we respond, and then we proclaim.

This song comes out of a deep and powerful tradition of spirituals sung by enslaved African Americans in the 19th century. In the face of suffering and injustice, they still found hope in the story of a God who came near. They sang that hope. They passed it on. And over time, "Go Tell It on the Mountain" became not only a Christmas carol, but a testimony of bold, faithful witness.

It still is.

We don't need a mountain to share the good news. We just need willingness. This season, there are people around you who may not know why Christmas matters. They may know the songs, but not the Savior. You might be the person God uses to reach them.

Not with pressure, but with joy.

Not with perfection, but with love.

Just like the shepherds, we go because we've seen something worth sharing.

Jesus Christ is born. That is good news for everyone. And it's meant to be told.

