

Discovering Christmas Comfort and Joy

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God rest you merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay, for Jesus Christ our Saviour was born upon this day, to save us all from Satan's power when we were gone astray: O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy, O tidings of comfort and joy.

Charles Dickens referred to this song in his classic work, “A Christmas Carol.” The message of hope that came to the 18th century London Dickens described as “shrouded in filthy brown fog,” resonates today. “Comfort” means “give strength and hope to; to ease the grief or trouble of; console,” and can also be “a feeling of relief or encouragement” (Webster). When “merry” was used in the Middle Ages, it meant “great and mighty.” Instead of trying to have a happy Christmas (or living in a “fog” of pressure and stress), why not ask God to make you mighty?

Despite strained relationships, illness, business challenges, loss, or other concerns, it’s possible to live in God’s limitless strength. When we’re so physically, spiritually, mentally, or emotionally exhausted that it’s challenging to imagine enjoying the holidays, why not accept God’s help and hope? His provision never runs dry. As we turn to Him for comfort and joy, we experience authentic life that’s more than anything the world can deliver (even with free shipping!).

In 2 Corinthians 1:3, God is described as the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort*. It’s safe to rely on Him for comfort amidst conflict, pain, and trials. We can steadfastly, repeatedly rely on God’s *peace that passes understanding* (see Philippians 4:4-8), switching our focus from problems to God. In “My Utmost for His Highest,” Oswald Chambers explains this as the “Delight of Despair,” stating “Whenever His hand is laid upon you, it gives inexpressible peace and comfort, and the sense that *underneath are the everlasting arms* (Deuteronomy 33:27).” Our peace doesn’t come from what’s happening; it grows when we choose to be confident in the One holding us!

Like sheep, we’re vulnerable; therefore, we can easily become anxious. God understands our fears and provides for our needs. He *led His people out like sheep and guided them like a flock in the wilderness. He led them safely, and they were not afraid...* (Psalm 78:52-53). We can choose joy regardless of what’s happening. Rick Warren describes joy as “the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be alright, and the determined choice to praise God in every situation.”

“God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen” looks at comfort and joy through the lens of God’s Word. *‘Fear not, then,’ said the Angel, ‘let nothing you affright. This day is born a Savior of a pure Virgin bright. To free all those who trust in Him from Satan's power and might.’* Because of the freedom Christ won for us on the Cross, we can sing the refrain: *“O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy, O tidings of comfort and joy.”*

Is anything robbing your comfort and joy? You can rely on Jesus instead of allowing mental, spiritual, or emotional “embezzlement.” Perhaps our Good Shepherd is allowing you to endure new depths of loss so you can experience new heights of His love. *Let nothing you dismay!*

When we allow God to be the center of our celebration, we’ll experience tangible comfort and joy, along with a continual reason to celebrate.



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