

“The Angel’s Song”

Sermon by Rev. Dr. John M. Best to the First Presbyterian Church of Battle Creek
Christmas Eve, December 24, 2020

“Glory to God in the highest heavens, and on earth peace among those whom God favors.” (2:14)

Music is such an important part of our Christmas tradition.

It fills our homes while we work on our gift projects and gift wrapping,
while getting Christmas cards ready to send,
while decorating our homes,
while baking.

Christmas music fills and transforms our homes.

In my sermons this Advent I have been exploring with you Songs of the Season,
Some of the first original songs of Christmas.

The Prophet’s Song: A Song Few Want to Hear

*“Prepare the way o Zion, Your Christ is coming near.
Let every hill and valley a level way appear.”*

Meaning the landscape must shift.
God is going to shake things up.

Zechariah’s Song is called the Benedictus, because it begins with Blessed.

*“Blessed be the God of Israel, who comes to set us free,
Who visits and redeems us who grants us liberty.”*

He was struck dumb disbelieving word that he and his wife Elizabeth
at their age would have a son, who would do great things.

He found his voice and sang with confidence in the new day.

Singing in the new day of redemption, when it was still unseen.

The prophet Zephaniah gave us **Zion’s Song**, calling us to sing with joy,

*“Sing aloud, O daughters of Zion, Shout, O Israel.
Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem.”*

It turns out that God exults over you with loud singing.

Zion’s song turns out to be God’s song rejoicing over us, loving us.

Mary’s Song, is called the Magnificat because it begins with the word Magnify.

*“My soul magnifies the Lord.
And my spirit rejoices in God my savior
For he has looked with favor on the lowliest of his servant,
For the mighty one has done great things in me.
For he has brought down the powerful from their thrones
And lifted up the lowly,
He has filled the hungry with good things,
And sent the rich away empty.”*

God in Christ would reset the table.

Tonight, as we hear the Christmas story told again through scripture and song,
we hear of **Shepherds** going to visit the holy family, and returning to their homes

glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard.
There is a song there, but what they sang was not recorded for us.

The Song that is given to us on this holy night is the Angel's song.

"Glory to God in the highest heavens, and on earth peace among those whom God favors." (2:14)

If we were together and able to sing together, I would have us all sing,
Gloria, Gloria, in excelsis Deo, Gloria, Gloria, alleluia, alleluia.

The angel's Song is called the Gloria, because it begins with Glory.

But what does "glory" mean? What does it mean to give glory to God?

The English word "Glory" is a translation of the Hebrew word "*kabod*,"
which means "**weight**" or "**importance**."

To have glory is to be weighty or important to you and others.
That is why of all metals, **gold** is the one valued the most,
because it is the heaviest.

The word "glory" is also the translation of the Greek word "**doxo**," as in "**Doxology**."
In traditional worship services, the Doxology is song the offerings are brought forward.

*"Doxo-Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise God all creatures here below.
Praise God above, ye heavenly hosts.
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost."*

Paul Peterson was an elderly man whom I once visited often.

He was dying of heart disease.

As he reviewed his life he would often tell me about his wife.

*"She was always so wonderful, and I gave her so much grief.
I don't know how I can ever make it up to her."*

Tears would fill his eyes and run down his cheek.

He gloried in her, giving her weight and importance in his life, praising her.

As every spouse should his/her beloved.

But even if we don't, even if we forget,

even if we neglect in our Attention Deficit Disorder lives
with all our hurrying and scurrying around after who knows what,
with all our important and sometimes misplaced priorities,
know that the heavenly hosts sang on this holiest of nights,
and I believe continue to sing,
Gloria, Gloria, in excelsis Deo, Gloria, Gloria, alleluia, alleluia.

**If the breaking news of the hour is freaking you out,
hear the good news given to the Shepherds.**

*"Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:
to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the messiah, the Lord. This will*

*be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”
(2:10-12).*

This night Almighty Mysterious far-off God of highest heaven
has come near and is lying in a manger, Emmanuel, God with us!