

O Holy Night Lyrics: Placide Cappeau/Music: Adolphe Adams 1847

Translated: John Dwight Sullivan 1855 © Public Domain

If you'd like to see a music video of the song: https://youtu.be/g4fvMgNfNoI?list=PLOCq38Rz-3or-VFt-6PSgTAMx1h4a_a73

O Holy Night! The stars are brightly shining, it is the night of our dear Savior's birth.
Long lay the world, in sin and error pining, 'til He appeared and the soul felt it's worth.
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices. O night divine, o night when Christ was born.
O night, O holy night. O night divine!

Led by the light of faith serenely beaming, with glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.
So led by light, of a star sweetly gleaming here came the Wise Men from Orient land.
The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger in all our trials, born to be our friend.
He knows our need, to our weakness is no stranger. Behold your King, before Him lowly bend.
Behold your King, before Him lowly bend.

Truly He taught us to love one another; His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother. And in His name, all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy, in grateful chorus raise we; let all in us praise His holy name.
Christ is the Lord, o praise His name forever! His power and glory forever more proclaim.
His power and glory forever more proclaim!

There are over 500 references to worship in the Bible. The majority speak of God's people worshipping other gods or idols, documenting the many times they turned away from God.
2 Kings 17:15 *"They rejected His laws and the covenant He had made with their ancestors, and despised all His warnings. In their foolishness they worshipped heathen idols despite the Lord's stern warnings."*

The Living Bible¹

"Long lay the world, in sin and error pining, 'til He appeared and the soul felt it's worth."

When we talk about "worshipping idols" what kinds of idols do you think of? Are there any "idols" that you put before God? What does that sort of behavior do to our feelings of self-worth? Do you feel you have worth in Jesus' eyes? Why? If not, what steps can you take to help you recognize and accept your own worth?

"A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn."

The symbolism a new day dawning is powerful. What do you see in the birth of Christ that makes it a "new and glorious morn"?

Take a few minutes, to close your eyes and listen. Can you “hear the angel voices”? What do they say? How does that make you feel?

“Led by the light of faith serenely beaming, with glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.”

The song says “we stand”, not the shepherds, but we – you and I. Picture yourself standing by the manger, looking down at the newborn baby Jesus. How does that make you feel?

The literal English translation says “May the ardent light of our faith guide us all to the cradle of the infant.” The commonly used translation seems to infer an invitation from someone as we are “led by the light of faith serenely beaming”. This is very appropriate for a first encounter with our Savior – like the shepherds. But the literal translation lays out a return path, because it is our faith that guides us to the manger.

Are you trying to find the manger for the first time? Are you ready to follow the “light of faith serenely beaming” to the side of the manger? Open your heart to the journey as we continue to prepare for the celebration of Jesus’ birth.

Have you found the manger? Have you been taking the time this Advent to travel that path lit by “the ardent light” of your faith? Why? How does this make you feel? If you haven’t, take some time to think about steps you can take now to move forward on that path.

As we move along that path to the manger – whether for the first time or the 50th – we’re reminded that the path leads us to “our friend” who “knows our need, to our weakness is no stranger”. Does the fact that Jesus has faced the same struggles and challenges we face effect your view of Jesus? In what ways? Jesus accepts us “as we are, where we are” because He understands our experiences. Does that acceptance effect how you view yourself “as you are, where you are”? Why?

“Truly He taught us to love one another; His law is love and His gospel is peace.”

Matthew 22:36-40 *“Teacher, what is the greatest commandment of the law?” (Jesus) replied. ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: you must love your neighbor as you love yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.’”* Common English Bible²

Romans 5:1 *“Therefore, since we have been made right with God by putting our trust in Him, we have peace with Him. It’s because of what our Lord Jesus Christ did for us.”* New Life Version³

Take some time to consider the ways Jesus taught us “to love one another”, and make a list. Which one of these touches you the most? Why?

Jesus said we should love God all our “heart”, with all our “being” and with all our “mind”.

Why do you think Jesus mentioned each of these? What happens if we love God with our heart but not our mind? With our mind but not our heart? In what ways can you love God with your

“*all your being*”? Does loving God this way show our trust? How? Does trusting God bring peace? Why do you feel that way?

“Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother. And in His name, all oppression shall cease.”

Galatians 5:1 *“Let me be clear, the Anointed One has set us free – not partially, but completely and wonderfully free. We must always cherish this truth and stubbornly refuse to go back into the bondage of our past.”*
The Passion Translation⁴

John 15:15 Jesus said *“I no longer call you slaves, for a master doesn’t confide in his slaves; now you are my friends, proved by the fact that I have told you everything the Father told me.”*
The Living Bible¹

Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, and John talk about freedom in Jesus in slightly different ways, but it *is* Jesus who sets us free no matter how you look at it. What has Jesus set you free from? How does that make you feel? Is it easy to “*go back into the bondage of our past*”? Could that be the purpose of Advent? To give us the opportunity each year to see where those chains have slipped back on and to once again commit ourselves to the wonder of the coming Christ Child – the One born to break those very chains?

Whether you feel you’ve never experienced Jesus’ freedom from slavery – to sin, to bad habits, to whatever it may be – or if you feel you’ve slipped those chains back on, take some time this week to offer those things to Jesus. Consider it a birthday gift to Him. Since His mission was to bring us all back into relationship with God, I know Jesus will consider your trust in Him to break those chains to be the greatest gift you could possibly offer.

“But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence.”

Jeremiah 17:7 New Living Translation⁵

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