

Angels From the Realms of Glory James Montgomery 1816 United Methodist Hymnal #220

If you'd like to listen to the song: <https://youtu.be/iDNpOWDCcOA>

Angels from the realms of glory, wing your flight through all the earth.

Ye who sang creations glory, now proclaim Messiah's birth.

Come and worship, come and worship. Worship Christ the newborn King!

Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o'er their flocks by night;

God with man is now residing, yonder shines the infant light.

Come and worship, come and worship. Worship Christ the newborn King!

Sages leave your contemplations; brighter visions beam afar;

Seek the great desire of nations, ye have seen His natal star.

Come and worship, come and worship. Worship Christ the newborn King!

Saints before the alter bending, watching long in hope and fear.

Suddenly the Lord descending, in His temple shall appear.

Come and worship, come and worship. Worship Christ the newborn King!

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“Angels from the Realms of Glory was first published on Christmas Eve 1816 in the *Sheffield Iris*. The hymn has a sense of urgency and excitement, magnified by the use of imperative verbs throughout, especially in the refrain: ‘come and worship.’” (Dr C Michael Hawn, History of Hymns, June 19, 2013 [umcdiscipleship.org](http://umcdiscipleship.org))

“Come and worship, come and worship. Worship Christ the newborn King!”

Why do you think Montgomery emphasizes the words “come” and “worship”? What does worshipping Jesus look like to you? Do you think it's important for us to leave where we are to worship Jesus? What advantages do you see to doing that? Disadvantages? Take some time to consider your personal routines for worshipping Jesus. Ask God to show you if there are other ways God is calling you to “Come and worship.”

“Angels from the realms of glory, wing your flight through all the earth.

Ye who sang creations glory, now proclaim Messiah's birth.”

Luke 2:10-12 *“The angel said ‘Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: a Savior has been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.’”*

The Message<sup>1</sup>

The first thing the angel said to the shepherds was “Don't be afraid.” Put yourself in that scene. See yourself sitting with the shepherds. How would you feel if an angel suddenly appeared?

Would these words of reassurance help? What about today? Do we still need that reassurance today? Why?

The angel said that Jesus' birth was "*a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide*". Why is that an important reminder? Do you feel that some people try to limit who Jesus came to earth for? Why do you feel that way? How does that make you feel?

"Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o'er their flocks by night;  
God with man is now residing, yonder shines the infant light."

Luke 2:15b-18 *"The shepherders talked it over. 'Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us.' They left, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherders where impressed."* The Message<sup>1</sup>

Why do you think Jesus came to earth as a baby? What influence could growing-up as a human have on His ministry? What about His understanding of your life, your struggles, your accomplishments? How does the idea of a Savior as a helpless infant – destined to go through runny noses, scraped knees, growing pains – impact your view of Jesus? Does it change your idea of what a relationship with Jesus can be like? Why?

"Sages leave your contemplations; brighter visions beam afar;  
Seek the great desire of nations, ye have seen His natal star."

Matthew 2:1-2, 9b-11 *"Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem, in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. At about that time some astrologers from the eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking 'Where is the newborn King of the Jews?' For we have seen His star in far off eastern lands and have come to worship Him.' The astrologers started out again, and look! The star appeared to them again, standing over Bethlehem. Their joy knew no bounds! Entering the house where the baby and Mary, His mother, were, they threw themselves down before Him, worshipping. Then they opened their presents and gave Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh."* The Living Bible<sup>2</sup>

What "star" helps you find Jesus? Is it something you can share with others to make it easier for them to help find Jesus? Does your "joy (know) no bounds" at the birth of Jesus? If not, why not? Are there steps you can take during this Advent season to move closer to a place of joy in Jesus? Describe them, and then offer them to God and ask for help in following those steps.

"Saints before the alter bending, watching long in hope and fear.  
Suddenly the Lord descending, in His temple shall appear."

Philippians 2:9-11 *“Because of (Christ’s) obedience, God lifted Him high and honored Him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth - even those long dead and buried – will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ and call out in praise that He is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.”* The Message<sup>1</sup>

How does it feel to be one of “all created beings in heaven and earth” - back through the ages to the days of Jesus’ birth, and around the world today? Spend some time thinking about the grace and mercy wrapped in a blanket and lying in that manger. Rest in the knowledge that Jesus was born for you.

“The original final stanza is usually omitted in hymnals:

Sinners wrung with true repentance, doomed for guilt to endless pains.

Justice now revokes your sentence, mercy calls you; breaks your chains.

While such language seems harsh to modern ears, and indeed seems to end the Christmas hymn on a bit of a downer, it completes a thoughtful progression from the first to the last stanzas. The Angels song (stanza 1), leads to the shepherds’ adoration (stanza 2) and to the Sages’ gifts (stanza 3) and to the saints’ praise in heaven (stanza 4), and finally to the sinners’ repentance on earth (stanza 5). The themes of justice and mercy as well as the image of broken chains are also appropriate in the context of the poet’s life. His newspaper (the Sheffield Iris) denounced the social evils of his day, especially the slave trade. Montgomery was even jailed for his radical views: once for publishing a poem that celebrated the fall of the Bastille, and another time for denouncing the actions of the Sheffield police during a riot.

Even though the original final stanza may seem to put a damper on unbridled Christmas joy, Montgomery reminds us that the Nativity was an event celebrating the liberation of oppressed peoples by a just and merciful God taking on a human form. Let us celebrate, in the words of Montgomery, that God’s ‘justice now revokes [our] sentence’ and that God’s ‘mercy... breaks [our] chains!’” (Dr C Michael Hawn, History of Hymns, June 19, 2013 umcdiscipleship.org)

What chains might the birth of Jesus into your life break? How does that make you feel? If justice frees you and mercy calls you forward, how can you share these “Christmas gifts” others? Make a list of steps you can take, and use this Advent season to take one (or more) of those steps and share the gift of Jesus’ birth.

*“It’s in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for.”*

Ephesians 1:11a The Message<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Message Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson

<sup>2</sup> The Living Bible copyright © 1971 by Tyndale House Foundation. All rights reserved.