



O Come All Ye Faithful

Silent Night | 12.24.23

Libin Abraham

(The following text is automatically generated and has not been edited)

Libin Abraham 0:00

I believe we've got some kids in the room as just a pastor Jessica mentioned earlier. And kids, I want to ask you to do me a favor on the count of three, I want you to wish all of the adults a very merry Christmas. So here's what we're going to do. On the count of three. You are just going to scream at the top of your lungs, the words, Merry Christmas. Okay, here's your kids. You always love being loud. So here it is. 123 Let's hear kids. Don't you love that? Adults? Let's give it a four kids love the sound of children and our worship service.

Libin Abraham 0:46

Silence comes in a variety of forms, doesn't it? What you just experienced for 10 seconds was awkward silence. You did better than last service, there was people yelling all kinds of stuff to fill in the awkward silence because I'm supposed to be talking and a lack of communication makes us all very uncomfortable, awkward silence. But then there are respectful silence. You find yourself at Memorial Service and in solidarity and respect for someone. There's quietness and honor Schulen for a person. Then in moments like perhaps today, or another service is like this, there is sacred silence. We are in the presence of God and his glory. His presence is so weighty. There aren't enough words to describe it. So we're still in the all of his presence. Then today, more than ever, we need or we should practice digital silence, to pull away from technology and devise it to reengage with the people in our life with the physical, tangible spaces. In our world. I'm preaching today digital silence. But then you go through seasons of painful silence. You're sitting in the waiting room wondering if the operation was successful. You're wondering if you'll get that interview, call back. Maybe you're hoping and waiting for a son or daughter to call back in this time of the year. And sometimes that painful silence can even be deafening silence. But then there are moments of peaceful silence, this inner tranquility and serene peacefulness on the inside. Tomorrow morning. If you have kids at home, they will wake up saying yay, Christmas is here. And you'll go to bed saying yay, Christmas is over. Peaceful silence silence of all sorts

Unknown Speaker 2:46

exists.

Libin Abraham 2:49

I wanted to day this morning, as you find yourselves at home or here in this room at this Christmas Eve service. What type of silence you are living through? Is it a relational silence and unexpected once a long prolonged one, you're thinking when is this going to be over? It could be a painful season of silence and even one where you're longing for peace and hope and joy. Here I've been through in the last few weeks, we've been going through different characters. And if you're new or this is your first time, feel free if you're curious about some of the characters that are sung tonight and that we sing during the season to know the backstory and the truths behind them, you can find them on our line on our website. And today we want to end it with the hymn that we're going to sing together in just a few moments called Silent Night. In fact, it was Joseph Moore who wrote these words to this poem, that became a song today and he recorded the birth of Jesus in these words. He said Silent night, holy night, all is calm. All is bright, round a young virgin, mother and child Holy infant so tender and mild Sleep in heavenly peace. Anything but that night you could describe going into Bethlehem was silent nor calm nor bright. The journey to Bethlehem was chaotic. Actually. Caesar Augustus has just decreed a national decree for a census to be taken all across the Roman Empire. And what this means is higher taxation. If Mary and Joseph who already have very little

associated to their name, they're going to have to pay even more to the Roman Empire. So they're going into Bethlehem with a elevated sense of financial stress and anxiety, but they have to go back to the place of the burn. So they make the 90 mile journey from Nazareth all the way to Bethlehem. I know this might surprise you. It's the days before Uber and Lyft and airplanes. So all they have to ride on the back Have a donkey in mind you, Mary is probably full term pregnant. This is not a smooth, comfortable ride. They're not the only ones on the journey to Bethlehem. Not many people live in Bethlehem meaning if you were born there, you got out of there as quick as you could. It's a pass through town. So during the census, people are rushing back to Bethlehem. And Joseph was seeing people he hadn't seen in years. And here's what they're wondering. How's there already a baby in the picture? You ain't married yet, Joe. Snap, just the sound of the census. But a scandal of the pregnancy. That envelopes Mary and Joseph. As they get to Bethlehem, they're hoping, Lord, whatever happens, just don't bring the baby out here. We just came to register, we need to get back to Nazareth where our family is, and that's where we will give birth to this child, so anywhere but here. But you know, as often in life, things don't go according to plan. There they are in Bethlehem and notice how Luke records this moment and Luke to Verse four to seven. Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem. Because he was of the house and family line of David to be registered along with Mary who was engaged to him and was pregnant. While they were there, oh, while they were there in Bethlehem, the time came for her to give birth. And then she Mary gave birth to her first born son. And She wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. Just as they arrived at Bethlehem, Mary says, Joseph, it's time the baby is coming in frantically trying to find a place to lodge some guestroom, some in somewhere and no luck, no place for this baby to come out. So they find the manger, a place where animals will sleep, either on the hill side of a mountain in Bethlehem, or maybe on the side of a house somewhere, they found a manger. And there came Baby Jesus born there in

Unknown Speaker 7:17
Bethlehem.

Libin Abraham 7:19

The journey to Bethlehem was far from being silent, calm nor bright. But I imagine in that moment, Mary is heavily breathing. Joseph is nervous. And I think Joseph was even thinking God, you waited 4000 years, you couldn't wait two more days till we got back to Nazareth, really. But it had to be there in Bethlehem, into the chaos into the commotion, into this interruption, that Jesus came. It wasn't a silent night leading up to the delivery. But I imagine that as Mary and Joseph lay their eyes on the child of promise, their Messiah, everything became calm, bride, and even silence. We sing Silent Night, not because the circumstances are silent. Because in the face of Jesus, what happens is Heavenly Peace descended down to us. We sing about calm and peace and tranquility. Not because everything is right in the world. But everything can be right in here. Because in the coming of Jesus, peace was coming, Hope was coming. Joy was entering the world. In fact, the circumstances will get harder for Mary and Joseph, they will be fleeing for their life. But yet now they weren't alone anymore, and nor are weeds. God has entered our silence. He's entered our pain. He's entered our curiosity and questions, and he is Emmanuel, God with us. Whichever type of silence describes you tonight, I just want you to know God is well acquainted with every form of silence. And he knows where you are. And he's come to join you even in the painful silence of your life, and to bring to you peaceful silence, even in the middle of the painful

Unknown Speaker 9:14
lence.

Libin Abraham 9:17

Joseph Moore wrote the hymn Silent Night not simply to describe that nativity scene, but to describe the condition of a person who meets Jesus. This is a picture of Joseph Moore, he wrote Pat, him or that poem to describe what happens to you and I in the chaos and commotion and the questions of life when we meet Jesus, the heavenly peace that encounters us. Joseph Moore was born in 1792 On a cold wintry night in Salzburg, Austria. He was born to an unmarried woman by the name of an Anna skyborne and a scraper He was born out of wedlock. And in those days and times, this was immensely shameful. So from childhood on, he became ostracized, forgotten, even abandoned by his church and community. His father as soon after his birth, abandoned him there his mom, and he lived in complete destitution. And by the laws of Austria, that time, if a woman had a baby while unmarried, she had to pay a fine of what a years worth of wages. And Anna was just a seamstress. She didn't have any money. So she couldn't pay this fine, which then meant that her baby boy couldn't be baptized into the church, which then meant he couldn't earn an education or learn a trade. So this innocent child from birth

onwards is feeling forsaken, abandoned, isolated, all through childhood nothing because of what he did because of the condition he lived in simply by the way in which he was born. And then another man by the name of Joseph Walworth, he heard about Anna's story, Joseph, this Joseph, he was well off, but not well loved. Why? Because he was the local executioner of the town, literally paid to be the Hanged man to carry out that sentence. So you can imagine no one liked this fellow. He also felt isolated and ostracized by the community he lived in. So when he heard about Anna's condition, and the condition of his child, he had compassion. And he paid the fine that Anna couldn't pay. And now Joseph could be baptized. And Joseph Wallace became his godfather and named him Haftar himself. But even though the fine was paid, little Joseph more lived, isolated, estranged from the church, and the community of his day, he couldn't yet go to school. So he loved music. So here's what he would do. He would sit on the steps of the local church, listening to other boys and girls sing inside while he lived and stayed in the shadows of the church building. And he would just sing along as they sang inside, he would sit outside, singing with them. And one day the choir master of that church heard his voice, he came out to see who this little boy was who was singing so beautifully, and he made an exception for Joseph to come inside to join the choir. And this is how Joseph began to learn music. And soon the choir master encouraged Joseph to go to seminary and pursue ministry. He was denied at first but they advocated and they made an exception, and there he was, being trained to be a priest. In 1815, Joseph Morell graduated and became a priest. It was that same year that the Napoleonic Wars in Europe that had claimed between five or six and a half million lives all across Europe, over the last 13 years, those wars in 1815 finally ended. And guess what Salzburg, this town that Joseph was born in, it became the last state to be liberated from the occupiers. So with all of that in mind, Joseph with his personal story and view, a story, born into shame, and isolation and feeling forgotten, and forsaken, but yet now being embraced by God, being involved in ministry leading his church, and the change that Jesus brought about now seeing his local state freed from this horrible war, and the oppression it brought, Joseph sits down and 1816 begins to write the him. Silent Night. holy night. All is calm. Oh, it's bright. He was thinking about the impact Jesus brought into his own soul. He wrote a poem, not a song, just a poem, set it aside. And then two years later, he finds himself at a Christmas Eve, practice at his church leading the choir in their Christmas Eve rehearsal. And they're about to rehearse and soon they realized that a nest of mice of all faiths and nest of mice got into the church organ and totally messed up the organ incapacitated the Oregon and they can't use the Oregon for the Christmas Eve service. So there they sat in silence thinking what are we going to do? And Amelia this poem Joseph had written two years ago comes to mind. He grabs the music teacher, local by, they begin to compose the sound and the tune to what we sing today Silent Night, and there they were in Austria at a church called St. Nicholas of all places. And on that Christmas Eve, in the silence of that evening of a messed up Oregon,

Unknown Speaker 14:56
they sang Silent Night

Libin Abraham 15:00

So this hymn was written out of a life of pain and agony and shame. It was tuned within a night where all plans were interrupted, and everything seems to have gone array. And yet God use the chaos and the silence of both Joseph's life and that Christmas Eve, to bless the world, with this hymn that has now been dubbed, The most famous Christmas hymn in all of history ever to be written. What I hope you learn from Joseph's own story, and from the story of Jesus in the story of Mary and Joseph, is that God's silence is never his absence. God's silence is not his absence, maybe you have come into this morning to this Christmas Eve service to you thinking, Where is God, where his his voice? Where is his presence in my life, friends, Justice more will tell you his silence isn't his absence, for God is seen or unseen, heard, or unheard, at every moment of your life, God is working behind

Unknown Speaker 16:03
the scene.

Libin Abraham 16:06

This was the condition of the world. Right before the birth of Jesus scholars look at 400 years before the coming of Jesus, and they call it the period of silence. Because in those 400 years, there was no sighting of an angel, no new vision from God, no word from God heard and people wondered, Where is God? Where was the promise he made in Malecon? Where is the promise of a messiah? It seems silence. Little children will ask their dad Dad Hey, have you heard from God? No. The girls have asked her Mom, have you heard from God? They would ask their fathers and mothers has granddad heard has a great grandfather heard no, no. For centuries goes by. And nothing is spoken. But yet in the middle of those 400 years, God was

working behind the scenes. He was realigning the earthly empires of the world to bring about Pax Romana, or the Roman piece. And now for the first time ever, the whole world would have a universal language. Now for the first time ever it became and every nation became under the rule of a single emperor. Now there could be paved roads that were connected, and trade routes where any person could travel the entire known world carrying a message sending letters and people could travel, communicating a powerful message isn't a just like God, that across 400 years of silence, God was readying the world for the coming of his son. He was preparing the soil he was preparing the hearts of both the people and the Empire saw that his good news, the gospel of Jesus could go from one end of the earth to the other. And God is not silent in his absence. In fact, Paul would say like this in Galatians, four, verse four, when the set time had fully come. When the set time God knew what He was doing in the silence in the chaos. But when the set time had fully come, I hope some of you grab a hold of that tonight this morning, when the set time for your prayers to be answered. For the breakthrough. You're seeking for the anguish you're feeling for the set time had fully come. God sent His Son, born of a woman. Just when the world was ready for the message of the gospel to be spread. God sent His Son and God broke the 400 years of immense silence. But here's what boggles my mind. God didn't break those 400 years of silence by coming down on Mount Sinai like he did at Exodus, where with the thundering voice of God, the earth shook. And if he had the nation's would have seen, and they would have been mind boggled by the presence and glory of God and he didn't break his silence but coming on Mount Sinai heaven silence was broken through a human's cry. Heaven silence broken through an infant crying in a manger, a helpless baby a human cry. It was as if God was saying, I don't just hear your cries. I'm joining you in your cry. I'm stepping into the silence. I'm joining you in your pain. I'm even grieving with you in the silence. You're feeling I'm entering in I'm coming into your silence and your pain and awkwardness and whatever it may be. So that my life can be your light. peace can be felt in your pain, so that my life could overcome your death. Your agony he came into our silence the sound of a human cry, I'm gonna tell you that moment the earth might have not been silent. But I imagine heaven was silent. As myriads of angels are peering into this moment, they to being absolutely confounded by what they're seeing, and their a holy God is breaking forth and a human cry. The god they had been surrounded and worshiping and crying, holy, holy, holy, He now becomes the cry of an infant. What a moment for God to join us. Stand with us, be one of us, but not just to empathize with us but to overcome what we could not overcome on our own. There's no set Silent night Holy night. It was the most set apart night and all of history where God was ushering His kingdom. He was in fact offering the world a peace treaty, offering Himself as the only hope and light to the world. I want to tell you quickly another story of another night where this song and particularly the story of Christmas and the coming of Jesus brought stillness into one of the greatest war ridden times in all of history. This night was Christmas Eve 1914. We find ourselves in the thick of World War One, the war began in July. So five months and 1 million lives later, there are the Allied Forces and the Central Powers, combating fighting one another in northern France. There they find themselves in the rain cover trenches and victory is measured in inches. These opposing armies are just 100 yards away, fighting, killing, destroying one another. And then, something remarkable happens. One of the German soldiers that Christmas Eve night begins to sing Silent Night. The song was when originally in German. There they are in the middle of World War One and somebody breaks out in Silent Night. That's not what you're expecting to hear. But it's Christmas Eve. And these men are reminded of a story of the coming of Jesus. So they began to sing Silent Night. As the German soldiers finished singing, and then the British and the French they began to join in with the English version of Silent Night, and they join in unison and together these opposing armies are singing together, Silent Night, holding, all is calm, all is bright. And then they began to sing one Christmas hymn after another. All night long, they sang about the coming of Jesus and then came out on Christmas Day, and one of the soldiers bravely courageously stepped out of the trenches with hands held eye and he went to the opposing side, he crossed the no man's land, the killing field still aligned with frozen corpses. And he offered a Christmas truce on Christmas Day.

Unknown Speaker 23:07

It really happened.

Libin Abraham 23:10

And they crossed that field, still lying with dead bodies, and they shook hands and said Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas. They began to tell stories of home and show pictures of their family even exchanged souvenirs that they had bought onto the brought onto the battlefield. Even food and guess what they did on Christmas Day they played soccer together. This was such a milestone moment in Hall of history where the Christmas message into a fierce war, provide a safe haven of peace and calm. One of the corporals British Corporal John Ferguson, he says like this, we shook hands with each other and Merry Christmas. And we're soon conversing as if we had known each other for years. He we were laughing and chattering to men and chatting to men whom only a few hours ago, we were trying to kill. But something about the Silent Night story of Jesus,

peace into the chaos and the pain. In fact, this is a memorial still set up today to remember that milestone moment, the Christmas truce of 1914. And here's what I want you to know. Before we place our faith in Jesus, you and I are in a war with God. We're in rebellion with God Almighty fighting against his wish his desire for us its plan his design for our life. We are in a war within ourselves. And don't you see people at war with one another? The Bible says we were once enemies of God. And yet God didn't just do the remarkable he did the unthinkable. He left the trenches of heaven, Glory Almighty heaven and he came and he didn't just come halfway, he came all the way into the trenches of our sin, our dirt, our mud, our paths, our guilt. He didn't come halfway, he came all the way so that we could be rescued. That's what Paul was saying like this in Colossians one, verse 21. Once you and I were alienated from God, and we were enemies in our mind, because of our evil behavior, our rebellion against God, but now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body, through the depths of present you and I hold the righteous, perfect in a sight, without blemish and free from accusation. Can I hear an amen? That's what Jesus did. Perhaps that's why Joseph Moore would write glory stream from heaven above heavenly hosts, sing Allah Lujah, why? Christ, the Savior, our Savior, your Savior, my Savior, Christ is born. To prepare to light the candles, and I would invite my family, Stacy, Liam, and for you to join me here on stage. I have a feeling that tonight maybe some of you are still sitting on the steps in the shadow of the Church of Jesus Christ. You're wondering, is there a place for me in the story of God in this gospel message of Jesus, and you may not just be in a shadow, you may be living in the dark, can be turned down these lights. You may be wondering, is there any hope at all? For the trenches of life I find myself in. And I want you to know tonight, that this silent night is your holy night. It is a moment that God has set apart with you in mind friend, where he's saying to you, I came for you. I came to save and rescue the Joseph mores of the world. In fact, if you think about the manger scene, every person that's around Jesus felt forgotten, alienated, isolated by their culture, and by the religious institutions, from shepherds to peasants and even women in that day. Jesus says, I've come to rescue to elevate to lift up, I've come to welcome you home. So I want you to hear me if you're sitting in the shadow of the church. Because heart says come on in. Our church is saying to you come on in. You're loved here, you're welcomed here. There's a place for you at the feet of Jesus. The world was dark, caught in a cosmic battle that we couldn't overcome. But into the darkness, light came. John was say that the life of Jesus was the light of all mankind. He comes to expel the darkness of our soul, to free us from it once and for all, to transform you from the inside out. To give you joy, to pick up the broken pieces, feeling forsaken, forgotten, shame, whatever it may be, to make you whole. I say often, God doesn't just repair you. He makes you new. Cube redeems your soul makes you brand new. He fills your heart with this light. For those of us who have his light burning inside of us, we know that this is too good to keep to ourselves. Because we have so experienced what it means to be on the outside and now coming in to once be the enemies of God and now being the family of God. We can't help but share this light. My desire one day is that me and Liam would see this light of Jesus in us. And this light would begin to brightly shine in their heart. And they would share it with their world with their friends. And they would in beautiful ways spread the light wherever they go. This is why our mission is experienced and share the love of Jesus the light of Christ. They're going to help me light these candles. But you and I are invited to share this good news with the world. We have spent moments in some conversations so that we're all still in battle, either with God or with one another can experience the joy of salvation. That we share the news that light has come.

Speaker 1 29:35

Darkness has been expelled as Christ has been born