

Silent Night

Learning Objectives

- To discuss the history and focus of the carol "Silent Night"
- To consider God's power to bring peace out of chaos, silence, and grace
- To meditate on the story of Christmas and God's gift to all of us

? In the past, is "Silent Night" a song you've liked singing? Why or why not?

Silent Night

music by Franz Gruber

lyrics by Joseph Mohr

English lyrics by John Freeman Young

Composed 1818

Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin Mother and Child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight!
Glories stream from heaven afar;
Heavenly hosts sing Al-le-lu-ia!
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, holy night
Son of God, oh, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth

History of Silent Night

In 1818, flooding had damaged the church organ in Oberndorf, Austria. Joseph Mohr brought the organist Franz Gruber lyrics he had written, requesting Gruber to write a melody and guitar accompaniment for Christmas Eve Mass. The song spread, and today has been translated into at least 140 languages.

Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silent_Night

Listen to the song in German!

Original song in the original city in Austria in German:

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cesxg94Sc74>

Song in German:

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/32730955>

? What do you think is the main theme of this song?

Possible Answers: The song may be about the peace that Jesus brought with his birth, on the night of his birth but also for all of us in the future.

Read Out Loud:

In this classic carol, we see themes of peace out of chaos, silence, and grace. Let's look at how these are shown at different places in the Bible.

Peace Out of Chaos

Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

? Why are we told to present our requests to God when we might feel anxious? What are we promised when we approach God in this way?

Possible Answers: God knows that if we focus on Him and His power, it will help us realize He will take care of us. We are to pray about every situation, asking God for what we need. God will give us peace and mental and heart protection.

? What emotions do you feel when you pray?

Possible answers: These will vary; people may feel peace, worry, concern, hope, relief, anger, or a whole gamut of other emotions. Let people be genuine about what they're feeling without placing value judgments on their emotions.

? Have you ever experienced God's peace in a chaotic situation? What was it like?

Possible Answers: Leaders, share your own story if you have one to kickstart the discussion. Encourage and let people talk about their experiences.

Silence

Mark 4:35-40 (NIV)

³⁵ That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” ³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”



Where do you see silence in this passage?

Possible Answers: There was silence in Jesus’ peaceful sleep. The disciples felt like Jesus didn’t care because he was sleeping in the midst of a storm, but even then, he was in control. Jesus brought silence to the storm that was nearly swamping the boat.



How do you think the disciples felt about Jesus bringing silence? How would you feel in that situation?

Possible Answers: The disciples were astonished, afraid, and amazed at Jesus’ power (v. 41). They had thought His silence was recklessness and ignorance, but they saw the power that brought Him His peace. People might feel amazed, delighted, afraid, confused, curious, or many other emotions.

Leader’s Note: For more on peace in the midst of chaos, see also Psalm 46:1–3, 10.

Grace

Luke 2:4-20 (NIV)

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were

terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

? Where do you see grace in the Christmas story?

Possible Answers: God sends his son to be a helpless baby, making Him wholly human as well as wholly God, and able to understand our weaknesses. God fulfills his promises to His people to bring a Savior. God provides hope and peace in unlikely places.

? The shepherds mentioned in the song and in the Scripture passage were the first to see the grace of Jesus’ arrival. What were their reactions?

Possible Answers: The shepherds wanted to see the baby who would bring hope and change to the whole world. They went and worshiped him, and glorified God, as well as telling other people about the angels’ words.

? What is your reaction to being a recipient of God’s grace?

Possible Answers: Each person’s reaction may be slightly different, but all of us can feel a sense of awe, amazement, and gratitude at being the recipients of God’s grace.

Conclusion

? In times of distress and uncertainty, how do you remember God's grace, his power in silence, and the peace that He brings out of chaos? Which of these three things do you wish for the most right now?
Possible Answers: Re-reading Scripture to remember God's promises and power; looking back at your own life and how God answered prayer; asking God to give you what you need, including the fruits of the spirit and especially peace that surpasses all understanding; etc.

? How can we share these three things with those around us who are struggling with the chaos, noise, and harsh circumstances of the world?
Possible Answers: We can share these by exhibiting God's action in our lives. When we are in the midst of chaos but still experiencing peace, we can share that verbally with those also struggling. When those around us are in need of silence, we can be in comfortable silence with them. When those around us are in need of grace, we can show them grace and point them to the truth of God's grace that He showed to us, sharing the gospel with them.

For Discussion and Accountability

? What can you do to seek God's peace out of chaos, silence, and grace in the week to come?

? How would our lives look different if we lived in a way that showed that we truly believed that there could be peace in the midst of chaos?