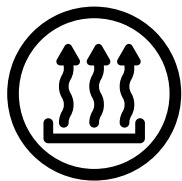




Born is the King:

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear



WARM-UP

What movie or show do you watch around the holidays that may not be traditionally considered a Christmas movie?

Read out loud as a group

HISTORY

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" is a song from a poem written by Edmund Sears. Edmund wrote this poem two years after he was forced to retire from ministry because of his health in 1849. It was inspired by his own journey as well as the political strife of his time, with the revolution in Europe and the war with Mexico in the U.S. It clearly shows the overwhelmed feelings of sin and strife in the world and how the message of peace that the angels bring is the true balm to the suffering. We see this clearly in the third stanza of the poem that is not in the hymn itself:

"But with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song, which they bring:
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing!"

NOTE: this hymn is inspired by Luke 2:6-20. As is "Angels We Have Heard on High" which is a separate small group study that includes the Luke passage.

Listen: Here is Frank Sinatra singing It Came Upon a Midnight Clear:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_xgJmKYx4SU&list=RD_xgJmKYx4SU&start_radio=1

Read out loud as a group

IT CAME UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR

1 It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to men,
from heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
to hear the angels sing.

2 Still through the cloven skies they come
with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats
o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains,
they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.

3 And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow,
look now! for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
and hear the angels sing!

4 For lo! the days are hastening on,
by prophet seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world send back the song
which now the angels sing.



What do you like about this hymn?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary.



What do you think of when you hear the word peace?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary.



In what ways are we/the world weary? What are the things that give us rest?

Possible Answers: will vary. Life, relationships, politics, culture, etc. The song reminds us that worship, reflecting on God's goodness, remembering his promises of peace can give us rest along with the hope that one day we will enter complete rest, peace, and freedom from weariness and strife.



This hymn doesn't explicitly mention Jesus, rather it emphasizes the angels and their message that God is bringing peace. What might it signify that angels were the messengers?

Possible Answers: It showed that this was something new, important, miraculous, and final. It emphasized the divine nature of Jesus and the turning point for humanity.

Read out loud as a group

“...In the Bible peace is a key characteristic of God and a prominent concept. As in its ancient counterparts, the Bible's prominent meaning of peace is political. But the political means of peace are associated with emotional and physical meanings and numerous images from the military, agriculture and home. The Hebrew šālēm literally refers to being uninjured, safe and sound, or whole.”

- “Peace” in Dictionary of Biblical Imagery



The ultimate peace is that we are no longer enemies and at war with God, but have peace with Him. What specifics of peace are standing out to you the most? Why?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary.

Read out loud as a group

ISAIAH 9:2-7 ESV

2 The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.

3 You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the
spoil.

4 For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in
battle tumult and every garment rolled in
blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

6 For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his
shoulder,

and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and of
peace

there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his
kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.



What stands out to you about this passage?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary.



What are all the titles given to this coming child/Jesus/God in this passage?
Which one stands out to you the most and why?

Possible Answers: great light, child is born, son is given, Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Lord of Hosts.



How is the peace of Christ different from the peace of the world?

Possible Answers: the world offers quick fixes and temporary peace usually focused on what YOU do while Christ offers us an everlasting peace that is initiated, grown, and finished in Him.

DISCUSSION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY



- What feels like a “crushing load” to you today? How can we, your small group, come around you?
- What are ways you can look to Jesus for peace this week?