



“Stille Nacht”

On December 25, 1818, the song “Stille Nacht” (Silent Night) was sung for the very first time. Today, this treasured Christmas carol has been translated into more than 300 languages!

Joseph Mohr, the author of Silent Night was born in Salzburg on December 11, 1792 to Anna Shoiber and Franz Mohr. Joseph was conceived out of wedlock and his father deserted his mother when he found out that she was pregnant. As a result, Anna and young Joseph suffered socially and financially. God in his grace provided a father figure and role model for Joseph through Johann Nepomuk Hiernle, the choirmaster at the church they attended. Johann immediately recognized Joseph’s exceptional musical abilities and had Joseph take music lessons. He learned how to play the organ, guitar and violin. At the age of 19 Joseph entered seminary in Salzburg and was ordained in 1815 at 23 years of age.

He first served in the village of Mariapfarr, where his grandfather lived, and where he wrote the text of Silent Night in 1816. Health issues brought on by the harsh climate in Mariapfarr forced Mohr to return to Salzburg in 1817. After he recovered, he moved to Oberndorf, and met church organist Franz Xaver Gruber who composed the music to Mohr’s beautiful Christmas poem Silent Night.

Silent Night was sung by Mohr and Gruber and performed by Gruber on guitar shortly after midnight on the morning of December 25, 1818, at the St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf, Austria. As the story goes, the organ at St. Nicholas’ fell into disrepair so Silent Night was first performed on a guitar. The carol soon after became a traditional part of Christmas in German-speaking countries.

Ninety six years later Silent Night played a unique role in bringing together soldiers from the German and British armies. The year was 1914 and soldiers were having to spend Christmas Eve on the battlefields of France during World War I. After only four months of fighting, more than a million men had already perished in the bloody conflict. The bodies of dead soldiers were scattered between the trenches. Enemy troops were dug-in so close that they could easily exchange shouts.

On December 24, 1914, in the middle of a freezing battlefield in France, a miracle happened. The British troops watched in amazement as candle-lit Christmas trees began to appear above the German trenches. The glowing trees soon appeared along the length of the German front. Henry Williamson, a young soldier with the London Regiment wrote in his diary: “From the German parapet, a rich baritone voice had begun to sing a song I remembered my German nurse singing to me.... The grave and tender voice rose out of the frozen mist. It was all so strange... like being in another world — to which one had come through a nightmare.”

*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.*

“They finished their carol and we thought that we ought to retaliate,” another British soldier wrote, “So we sang “The First Noël” and when we finished, they all began clapping. And they struck up “O Tannebaum” and on it went... until we started up “O Come All Ye Faithful” and the Germans immediately joined in this was really a most extraordinary thing — two nations both singing the same carol in the middle of a war.” It is recorded that enemy soldiers greeted each other in the no man’s land that was a killing zone the day before. The soldiers wished each other Merry Christmas and agreed not to fire their rifles on Christmas Day. The spontaneous cease-fire eventually embraced much of a 500-mile stretch of the Western Front. According to the reports of soldiers at the scene, hundreds of thousands of soldiers celebrated the birth of the *Prince of Peace* among the bodies of their dead.

Other soldiers told of how the “enemies” exchanged badges and buttons from their uniforms. Others shared photos of wives and children and some even exchanged addresses and promised to write after the war ended. The German troops rolled out barrels of dark beer and the British reciprocated with offerings of plum pudding. Some soldiers produced soccer balls and a spirited match broke out as fellow soldiers shouted encouragement.

At one location along the front the men who just the day before sought to kill one another now gathered together to bury their dead. Together, with heads uncovered, they held a service to memorialize their fallen comrades. A solitary voice began to sing Silent Night, in French. He was joined by another voice — this one singing in German — the words of a Christmas song known and beloved by all. But the miracle of peace was temporary. Slowly, under threats from their officers, the troops returned to the trenches and the recoils of rifles were heard once again.

The apostle Paul wrote the letter of Colossians to point the church to the one true God. In book of Colossians Paul reminds his readers who Jesus Christ is, and why the church at Colossae should turn and worship Him alone. If we are to enjoy true and lasting peace with God and with the world it is only possible through the forgiveness of our sins in and through the cross of Jesus Christ. Wars will never be silenced without the Prince of Peace ruling over the hearts of mankind.

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” (Colossians 1:15-20)

Let me draw your attention to seven statements Paul gives us concerning Jesus and why He is vitally important and the only one who can bring true and lasting peace on earth and forever.

1. Jesus is fully God – He is the image of the invisible God.
2. Jesus is the Creator of the universe.
3. Jesus holds the entire universe together.
4. Jesus has complete authority over the spiritual world.
5. Jesus is the head of the Church.
6. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead (He conquered death by his resurrection).
7. Jesus is the reconciler and secures our reconciliation by His death on the cross.

At Christmas time we remember the baby born to Mary but we should never stop at this point. Jesus the eternal God took human flesh for a reason! He came to reconcile sinners (you and I) to God by His death on the cross. It is only Jesus who can bring peace between God, the Holy One, and man the sinner. Without that peace there will never be any peace between men on earth and between nations.

This year when you are giving and receiving gifts, please take a few moments to reflect on the gift of gifts when God sent His one and only Son into our world so that all those who put their faith in Him and repent of their sins may have peace with God and eternal life. Now that's a gift worth receiving... and best of all it is a free gift from God. All the gold, silver and bitcoin in the world could never purchase what is infinite value and can only be received as a gift from God by faith alone.

We wish all our clients and friends a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, Happy Hanukkah and a Blessed New Year! For our clients, we thank each of you for the trust and confidence you have placed in us to help manage your assets in these chaotic days. I, along with our team, Doretta Amaral, Andrew Cheng, Jesse van de Merwe, Braden VanDyk, Jonathan Wellum Jr., Jacob Martignago and Josiah Van Gorp trust that each of you will take time to enjoy family and loved ones during the holiday season. Soli Deo Gloria.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays from your team at
ROCKLINC Investment Partners!



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