

Remnant Life Church
12.04.22
A Christmas Playlist – The First Noel
Luke 2:8-15

I would think that most of you know what a playlist is

- If you had a Nano player, an iPod, or iPad, then you have likely created a grouping of some of your favorite songs – that is a playlist
- If you were ever in a band, you know what a setlist is – the songs you will play in a particular set of songs
- This morning we are going to begin a 4-part series, culminating at our Christmas service on the 23rd, that will examine four Christmas songs that should be included on everyone's Christmas playlist
 - This morning we begin with “The First Noel”
 - We are going to be focusing, not so much on the songs themselves, but on the biblical meaning and significance of each one
 - After all, virtually all of our favorite songs this time of year point to Jesus

So, let's begin by looking at the song itself

- The song is of Cornish origin
 - Meaning that it comes from the a county in southwest England
 - It is recognized as the homeland of the Celtic people
- Its first publication in its modern form was in 1823 and then again in 1833
 - With editing and additional lyrics being added
- The word Noel (Nowell) is an early modern English synonym for Christmas from the French and prior to that Latin word for birth
- The song we sing today, in a four-part hymn format was arranged by English composer John Stainer in 1870

While that may be of interest to some of you, our focus is not on the song itself but what message of Jesus does it tell?

READ – Luke 2:8-15

- There are several key words in these verses but two of the most important are the words “Good News”
 - In the original language it is the word *you-ang-gehl-EED-zo*
 - That translates to preach, bring glad tidings, or proclaim good news
 - The glad tidings of those angels spoken to the shepherds was that Jesus was born!
 - That Savior of the World, foretold for centuries by the OT prophets, had arrived
 - The First Noel – the first birth
 - God in the form of man, human flesh, incarnate, had arrived!

Note something that is very telling of the first announcement

- It was not made to a great leader

- Herod was not told
- The Pharisees and Sadducees were not told
- Nor was the Sanhedrin
- The priests were not told
- Nor were the wealthy, powerful, or famous
- The first announcement was made to a group of men who were barely accepted into the culture of that society
 - Shepherds were the on the lowest ring of the social ladder
 - They lived away from people, they smelled like animals, they were uneducated, crude, and were thought to be thieves whenever they came into town
 - That is who God chose to alert first to the birth of His Son

This Good News first told to the shepherds promises us something

- It is not happiness
 - Because happiness is determined by what is on the outside
- It is joy
 - Joy is what we have on the inside that the outside cannot remove
 - Happiness comes and goes but joy is permanent regardless of the circumstances
- Best example are Paul and Silas in prison
 - **Acts 16** – they are in prison but listen to what it says they are doing
 - **Acts 16:23-25** - *After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.*
 - They were singing hymns to God!
 - Those are hearts that are not filled with happiness
 - They are filled with joy!
- This is the message the angels brought on that First Noel
 - Do not set your heart, your mind, and your emotions of happiness
 - That comes and goes
 - Instead set it on the joy of the Lord
 - **Neh 8:10** - *...the joy of the LORD is your strength.*
- This is why it is not easy for me to understand why a Christian will allow the circumstances of their lives to dictate their state of mind
 - Everything around you is temporary!!
 - Everything outside of you will not last
 - Jesus is forever
 - His presence in your life means your eternity is set
 - What more do you need to realize your source of joy?
 - If that does not move you to the place of thinking than YOU are the one who needs to carefully reexamine what is important in your life
- When you accept and fully believe that truth of God's love for you through Jesus Christ, several things should happen

- Your countenance should reflect that to others
- Your life should radiate the joy of the Lord
- No situation or circumstance should be able to rob you of that
- *2 Cor 12:10 - That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

That Good News should also result in praise – our praise to God

- When the angels finished with their message to the shepherds something unique happened that has never happened again
 - A host of angels appeared to sing praises to God
 - A host means a great number that is difficult of impossible to count
 - At the news of this great announcement the angels of heaven began to praise God
 - Does your life reflect one that is praising God?

Very simply, the Good News is that God incarnate has come (meaning God in human form or flesh)

- The prophet Isaiah, 700 years before it happened, wrote these words
- *Isa 7:14 - Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel*
- Can you image the joy when those who had been watching realized what had just occurred?
 - All that had been watching for
 - All that they had been reading for centuries
 - All that their hearts had been longing for had now taken place
 - Jesus had come!

But that Good News of the First Noel does one more thing – it invites us in

- The shepherds had a choice that first night
- They could ignore what they had seen and tried to explain it away
- Or they could obey the message they had heard and gone to find the Baby so they could tell others
 - And it is that same invitation the shepherds were given that has been given to each of us
 - How did the birth of a baby boy in a manger (a grotto really) impact your life?
 - As a Christian, a follower of Christ it means everything
 - You were condemned to die for your sin, now you have been given, not only life, but eternal life

That is what a source of joy looks like

- *The First Noel, the angels did say, was to certain poor shepherds in fields where they lay...*
- Let's restate that opening line of the first verse of the carol based on what we have learned this morning
- The first birth, on the first Christmas morning, a great announcement was made to the lowest of the people of Jerusalem by a number of angels too numerous to count.