

Silent Night
December 21, 2008
Luke 2:1-20
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Synopsis:

Silent Night was born in the frantic search to find a tune for a Christmas poem. So too with Luke's report of the birth of Jesus—It was a *story* in search of a *tune*. Joseph Mohr found the tune in his friend Franz Gruber. Luke found the tune in the Emperor cult of his day.

I.

A Frantic Search for a Tune

“Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!”

Joseph Mohr was frantic.
No music for Christmas Eve in 1818
What was he going to do?

#147 Silent Night
notice Text and Music
See *Stille Nacht*, Irregular meter
can use text with different music (setting)

SING to tune of *Joy to the World*
Silent Night, Holy Night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin, mother and child
Holy infant so meek and mild (repeat 3x)

- *Sounds funny, but it can be done: Words with diff tune
- *Mohr was frantic for a tune: What tune would he use?
- *We find the birth stories of Jesus in Matthew and Luke in different tunes--
Same story, different tunes.
- *What tune is playing in Luke's birth story?

II.

Tunes from the Culture

Luke 2:1 “A decree went out from Caesar Augustus”

What are some Christmas tunes from our culture?

- Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer
- Up on the Housetop
- You'd Better Watch Out!
- Jingle Bells
- White Christmas
- Blue, Blue, Blue Christmas
- Daddy, Please Don't Get Drunk this Christmas

POINT: We interpret the Christmas story from our culture

Luke's Culture: Part of the Pauline Mission

READ Luke 1:1-14

Words:

- Decree =given only by Roman senate
- Emperor Augustus =63/27BC-14AD, Octavian- heir of Julius
- World =inhabited area ruled by Emperor
- Quirinius =Syrian legate, 6AD, Roman province
- Register =Roman tax
- Good news =word used for Emperor birthday
- READ Priene Inscription
- Great joy =used in Emperor proclamation
- All people =see world
- Born =Emperor proclamation of birth (Sept 23)
- Savior =used of Augustus
- Lord =used of Augustus
- Host =armies (Roman)
- Peace =*Pax Romana*
Augustus: J Caesar assassinated, war, peace

Tune:

Emperor cult, fastest growing religion in Luke/Paul's day
Good news for all people is the Emperor is Savior

Story:

- Jesus is born story:
1. Good news
 2. Great joy to all
 3. Savior is Jesus
 4. Glory to God

Good news for all people is that Jesus is God's Savior

*Luke set the story of Jesus in the tune of the day.
This is the challenge for us as we proclaim the gospel of Jesus

III.

Silent Night in a Prussian Tune

Luke 2:2 This was taken . . . while Quirinius was governor of Syria

Words

- 1817 Oberndorf, Austria, Pr Joseph Mohr (25), RC, St. Nicholas
- wrote song lyrics for special services
- 1818 Christmas, no organ, broken, (mice and leather? Fiction)
- 1816 had written *Stille Nacht* (six verses), snowy walk near grandfather's house

Tune

- Franz Gruber (31), organist for St. Nicholas Church
- request from Mohr, wrote for guitar and choir in few hours

Transmission

- Karl Mauracher, organ builder, repaired St. Nicholas organ
- took words and tune around Austria
- 1832 Stasser family folk group performed in Leipzig
E.g von Trapp Family Singers (*Sound of Music*)
- King William IV of Prussia requested at Christmas concert
- 1839 Austrian group Rainers sang at Trinity Church in NYC
- By Civil War had become very popular (sung across the Rappahannock River 1862 near Fredericksburg VA)
- 1905 Haydn Quartet made first record on Hit Parade
- by 1960 was most recorded Christmas song

IV.

Silent Night in Our Tune

Luke 2:10 I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people

Frantic Joseph Mohr of Prussian Empire

-Found a *tune* for his *poem*

Careful Luke of Roman Empire

-Found a *tune* for his *story*

What *tune* fits the Christmas *story* this year?

Suggest verses:

Money, No Money

Cutbacks

Globalization

Climate Change

Green

Obama

Terror

Fear

Anxiety

READ Luke 2:10-14