

Silent Night



A narrative for three readers based on the Silent Night booklet available free from SGM Lifewords

Narrator: A story of peace at Christmas

Narrator: Many stories have emerged from the First World War – tales of heroism, loss and sacrifice. But perhaps the most remarkable of all is the story of what happened at Christmas, 100 years ago.

Reader 1: December 1914, and the war is six months old. As the autumn rains begin, the opposing sides dig in for the winter. Soldiers resign themselves to spending Christmas in the trenches.

Narrator: Centuries before, and thousands of miles away, another group of men was out in the fields at night.

Reader 2: That night, there were shepherds staying the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep.

Reader 1: Christmas Eve, and the British troops are struck by a surreal and beautiful sight – hundreds of tiny lights illuminating the enemy trenches. The Germans are putting up Christmas trees.

Reader 2: Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared among [the shepherds] and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Saviour, yes – the Messiah, the Lord – has been born today"

Reader 1: As the guns fall silent, there's a new sound on the wind. From across no-man's land comes the sound of singing – Silent Night, Holy Night. The opposing sides sing back into the darkness, trading verses, harmonising with the enemy.

Reader 2: Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God

Reader 1: Christmas morning. One by one, men dare to put their heads above the parapet, then stand on it. Now they're advancing towards the enemy, open hands outstretched.

Soon no-man's land is full of officers and men of both sides, shaking hands, talking, exchanging souvenirs.

Reader 2: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

Reader 1: Someone brings out a ball. Hats and coats are thrown down. With dozens on either side, in between the shell craters, a shambolic game of football breaks out.

Reader 2: When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened."

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in a manger.

Reader 1: The following morning, the order has come through to resume firing. The men refuse, or shoot at the sky. But then the artillery starts up again, the shells begin to fall. The Christmas truce is gone, nothing but a hopeful memory preserved in letters and diaries.

Reader 2: After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherd's story were astonished.

Narrator: Both the Christmas truce and the first Christmas story were breakthroughs of peace. The 1914 ceasefire could not last, but the peace that God sent to us in Jesus endures.

The baby born on that silent night so long ago went on to model a life of love and forgiveness, through his actions and his teaching. Through his death and resurrection, he reconciled us to God.

Reader 2: We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

All three: Now may the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times and in every situation.

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