

"What is the sound of Christmas?"

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What is the sound of Christmas? If the ads and flyers and miles of aisles are to be believed, then it is the thip-thip-thip and ka-ching of cold hard cash counted out and in. With a ho-ho-ho, decking the halls, and a mad dash culminating in a day called Black, the bleary-eyed seeker dives into the hurlyburly chaos as the day is sacrificed for the gods of profit, a Friday – like the one called Good when the Dayspring is sacrificed not for the gods but for the creatures. Bearers of gold, frankincense, and myrrh can appreciate these noises, even as they board their desert ships in search of a different, less raucous sound.

Perhaps Christmas follows the sound of a star becoming brighter than all the rest. We'll have to ask a child what sound that star makes, because we always ask children what sounds things make. The answer goes something like this: [with appropriate hand motions and vocal expression from percussive to gravelly to bright] “pum!-wraaaAAAWWRRRR-PSHEEEWWwww...twinkle-twinkle, aaah!” The answer doesn't satisfy us, though, as we give the child an indulgent smile and think scroogily, “there is no sound in the vacuum of space.” Still, the star is as impressive as the imagination of a child, and that's why we don't ask adults such wonder-full questions when it is the Child we seek.

The sound of Christmas could be the practiced choir and the angelic hosts in thousand-fold Caruso, Pavarotti, Merman, Holiday, Joplin, Houston, Carey, Groban, Buble, Dion, Knowles, Bieber, Swift chorus singing to shepherds with knees a-knock, “GLOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO-RI-A!” while in the background are heard the lowing of cattle, the baa-ing of sheep, and even all the animals talking, if Christmas specials are to be believed.

If the Gospel of John is to be believed, there must be another sound of Christmas. Since *the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us* then, for the Word to be intelligible, it must be swaddled. Like all words, the sound of Christmas needs silence to prepare the way and to let the Word resonate. If we are to hold the Word in our heart, it must be preceded and followed by silence or it will not be a word but droning nonsense. What is the sound of Christmas?

Silent night, Holy night,

All is calm, all is bright,

Round yon virgin Mother and Child.

Sleep in heavenly peace.

Sleep in heavenly peace.