

Indeed, you cannot get very far through the Christmas story without hearing someone singing. Mary singing her song of praise, her *Magnificat*, at the news that she would birth the Savior of the world. The angels singing, “Glory to God in the highest” as they fill the skies, informing the shepherds that the Savior has been born. Mary singing lullabies to her baby Jesus. Listen and you will hear beautiful, glorious music welcoming the arrival of the promised Savior.

Do you hear what I hear?

I ask such a question because I wonder if any of us (myself included) are truly listening to the music God is singing to us. Music of comfort and joy. Music of salvation.

A couple of years ago *The Washington Post* ran an intriguing story. It was about a young man dressed in jeans, a long-sleeved T-shirt and a baseball cap. One Friday evening he walked to the Washington subway station where, from a small case, he removed a violin. Placing the open case at his feet, he threw in a few dollars and some pocket change as seed money. Then he began to play.

The article reported, “For the next 45 minutes, as the violinist performed 6 great classical pieces, thousands of people passed by. Only seven people actually stopped to listen for more than a minute. Twenty-seven people tossed in some money.”

What people didn’t recognize was that the violinist was one of the world’s leading classical musicians, Joshua Bell. Bell is an acclaimed virtuoso, who plays to sold out concert halls. He owns one of the most valuable violins ever made – a Stradivari valued at \$3.5 million.

The renowned cello player, Yo-Yo Ma, once said that Joshua Bell “plays like a god.” Usually, in concert Bell gets paid \$1000 per minute. On that Friday evening in the Washington subway, he received a total of \$32.17.

The train station provided excellent acoustics for Bell’s performance; divine music flowed from his very soul. At the end of each piece, the article reported, there was no applause, just silent indifference. The master musician was ignored. People just walked past musical glory without giving it a second glance.

Only two people out of thousands actually stopped to listen to Bell’s entire concert. One was a postal worker named John who had learned the violin as a child and immediately recognized the quality of Bell’s performance. The second person, Stacy, had paid top dollar to see Bell in a concert three weeks before, and so she immediately recognized both his face and his unmistakable sound. It astounded Stacy that people were just walking by, hardly even glancing at Bell, tossing quarters to him. Quarters.

One of the world’s greatest musicians playing on the street for coins. Only a few people recognized him.

It makes me wonder: If we do not even have a moment to stop and listen to one of the best musicians in the world playing some of the best music ever written, how many other things are we missing?

Do you hear what I hear? God is singing to us, and nobody seems to be listening.

The story sounds strangely familiar, does it not? The world's greatest gift, the Word made flesh – Jesus Christ – is born in a lowly stable in Bethlehem. Although John the Baptist has been trying his darrest to point out what is happening right in front of our eyes, only a select few actually recognize the promised Messiah. Some simple shepherds, some magi from the East, and a humble carpenter and his bride-to-be.

Listen. Do you hear what I hear?

It is the song of Christmas. God himself is singing to us. If such a song doesn't make us want to stop everything and truly listen to its glorious message, what does that say?

If the good news of Christmas doesn't make our heart sing, then nothing will. For the message of the Christmas song is quite remarkable: God Almighty, the Creator of the entire universe, chooses to take on human flesh so that he can save us. God will come and live among us. Very few will recognize him; most will pass right on by. But there God will be, in a lowly stable, born to save.

Such a song should start the whole world singing! It should start all of us singing the good news so that others might hear this powerful song and choose to join in the singing.

Do you hear what I hear? Listen closely. It is the most beautiful melody you have ever heard – joyful, triumphant. God will give us his very own Son, Jesus Christ, that we might be saved. “Born that we no more may die.”

Listen and you will hear the very voice of God singing, “All is calm, all is bright.” God sings to renew our hope and to remind us that the darkness of this world will not and can not extinguish the Light of God's mercy and love.

Do you hear what I hear? It's unmistakable. God is singing. Will we stop and listen?

Let it be so in your life and in mine. Amen.