



08 December 2023

In the bleak midwinter

In the Bleak Midwinter is an old and well-loved Christmas Carol. You can feel the cold when reading the poem. Some renditions bring the snow, iron-hard ground and stone-solid water to life, prompting you to reach for a parka or move closer to the fireplace.

Yes, some people take issue with the snow and ice, saying conditions were not like that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Others tune it out because it is not a bouncy, feel-good carol such as *Joy to the World!* and *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!* But the poem is a *poem*. It is written so we feel the windy, icy cold.



So, what was Christina Rossetti showing us when she wrote this 150 years ago? Her approach is painting a picture of her message with images that we can feel, touch, understand.

The first stanza paints a picture of the spiritual conditions when Jesus was born.

In the bleak midwinter
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter
Long ago.

Jesus came into a world of iron-hard and stone-cold hearts, frozen by sin. The world is the same today. It is still *snow on snow*, *snow on snow*, layer on layer of sin.

The second verse tells us that while heaven and earth cannot contain or sustain Jesus, yet when He came to our sin-frozen world, a stable place was sufficient for His birth place. What great love and humility as He came to be our Savior, the greatest gift to the world!

The song closes with the question, in light of all that Jesus is and has done for me, “What can I give Him?” Being sinners by nature and action, we have nothing to offer Him. The answer, the only answer of what you and I can give Jesus for all that He has done for us: “my heart.”

When we accept God as the holy sovereign God, ourselves as unholy and sinful, and accept Jesus’ gift of forgiveness and everlasting life by trusting Him as our Savior and God, our iron-hard and stone-cold sinful hearts are cleansed, softened, made new, changed forever.

For those of us who have done this, there is an appropriate response today, in this season.

First, thank and praise God “for His indescribable gift” of Jesus (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Second, give God our hearts in the sense of allowing Him to rule in us each day, to be “both Lord and Christ” in and over us (Acts 2:36).

Third, make sure we live and speak the good news of Jesus to people who do not yet know Him during this season so their hearts, lives, relationship with God and destiny can be changed forever.

Pastor Lyle