Christmas Day   Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

Good Christian men, rejoice With heart and soul, and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say: News! News!
Jesus Christ is born today: Ox and ass before Him bow,
And He is in the manger now. Christ is born to day!
Christ is born today!

Good Christian men, rejoice, With heart, and soul, and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;
Ox and ass before him bow, And he is in the manger now.
Christ is born to-day! Christ is born to-day!

God rest you merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day;
To save us all from woe and sin when we were gone astray.
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy.

In Bethlehem, in Jewry, this blessed Babe was born,
And laid within a manger upon this blessed morn;
The which His mother Mary did nothing take in scorn.
O tidings of comfort and joy. O tidings of comfort and Joy!

Good Christian men, rejoice With heart, and soul, and voice;
Now ye hear of endless bliss: Joy! Joy!
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He hath 'oped the heavenly door, And man is blessed evermore.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!

Good Christian men, rejoice, With heart, and soul, and voice;
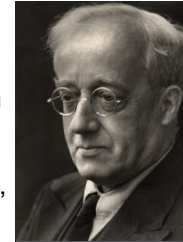*(Repeat text from verse two.)*

Now to the Lord sing praises, All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas All others doth deface.
O tidings of comfort and joy, Comfort and joy.
O tidings of comfort and joy

Good Christian men, rejoice, With heart and soul, and voice;
Now ye need not fear the grave: Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all To gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

Expressing the good news of the birth of Christ, who is born to
save, this anthem calls all Christians to "rejoice with heart and soul

and voice!"   Composed by the esteemed British composer Gustav Holst as a "Choral Fantasy On Old Carols," it a long-time favorite of congregations and choirs. Holst used several well-known carols in this 'fantasy,' interweaving them throughout the piece. Beginning with *Good Christian Men Rejoice!* he then introduces *God Rest You Merry Gentlemen*, only to return to *Good Christian Men*. Near the end he includes a bit of *The First Nowell* sung by Gaby Carrillo combined with *Good Christian Men*. Alto Julia Glunt sings *Good Christian Men Rejoice*, and the entire choir sings a very quiet 'Christ was born to save' as an introspective ending.   In the interest of time, a middle section based on a carol from Brittany has been omitted.

Gustav Holst

Both text and tune of *Good Christian Men Rejoice* date from at least the 14th Century. The earliest manuscript of the text dates from around 1400 (Leipzig), though the carol wasn't published until 1533 in *Geistliche Lieder.* Mention of the carol, however, was made as early as the fourteenth century. The carol is part of the late medieval tradition of teaching the Bible and theology to 'common people' by means of folk music. The original text was bilingual, combining Latin and German. In keeping with gender neutral language, newer hymnals have altered the text to "Good Christian Friends (or Folk) Rejoice." The English translation and paraphrase is by John Mason Neale (1818-1866). The tune, known as *In Dulci Jubilo* is a German tune from the 14th Century, first published in 1535.

The text of *God Rest You Merry Gentlemen* is traditional olde English and is reputed to date from the 16th century although it was first printed in 1760. *The First Nowell* is an old English carol and employs the Old English spelling "Nowell" rather than the French "Noël."

All this said, the message of the carol is clear and may be found in the last line of each stanza: "Christ is born today!" "Christ is born for this!" Christ was born to save!"

CHRIST WAS BORN TO SAVE!