

Thought for the Week – Week 8 (December 17, 2020)

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.
Luke 2: 13-14*



Dear friends,

This week, I share with you a Christmas video with strains of several carols in it – *Angels We Have Heard on High* and *Angels, from the Realms of Glory*, in particular. You may find that as you listen to the carols sung and drama enacted, you will feel chills up your spine. The video will remind you of the true meaning of Christmas, and so I invite you to be blessed by it.

But first, let me share a bit of history about *Angels from the Realms of Glory* with you. Like all Moravians, John Montgomery had a burden for world evangelism. He was the only Moravian pastor in Scotland, but he and his wife felt God's call to be missionaries to the island of Barbados. Tearfully placing their six-year-old son, James, in a Moravian settlement near Ballymena, County Antrim, Ireland, they sailed away. James never saw them again, for they perished in Barbados.

Left with nothing, James was enrolled in a school in England. When he didn't do well, he was apprenticed by school authorities to a baker. Baking wasn't for James. He ran away and spent his teenage years drifting from pillar to post, writing poetry, and trying his hand at one thing then another. He eventually settled down in Sheffield, England.

In his early twenties, James began working for the local newspaper, the *Sheffield Register*, and there he found his niche. He loved writing. It was a politically active newspaper, and when its owner suddenly had to flee the country to avoid persecution and imprisonment, James purchased the paper and renamed it the *Sheffield Iris*. His editorials, too, proved unpopular with local officials. On two separate occasions he was thrown into jail. But he emerged from prison a celebrity, and he used his newly acquired fame to promote his favorite issues.

Chief among his interests was the gospel. Despite the loss of his parents, James Montgomery remained devoted to Christ and to the scriptures, and he championed the cause of foreign missions and of the British Bible Society.

As the years passed, he became the most respected leader in Sheffield, and its citizens eagerly read his writings. Early on Christmas Eve, 1816, James, 45, opened his Bible to Luke 2 and was deeply impressed by verse 13. Pondering the story of the heralding angels, he took his pen and started writing. By the end of the day, his new Christmas poem was being read in the pages of his newspaper. It was later set to music and was first sung on Christmas Day, 1821, in a Moravian Church in England: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*. His parents would have been proud.

Enjoy the carols and drama on the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5mdybeyLVc>

May God bless and keep you from your Partner in Ministry,

Carol

*Ring out ye crystal spheres!
Once bless our human ears,
If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time
And let the bass of Heaven's deep organ blow;
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.*

John Milton

*Bless the Lord, O you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his bidding.
obedient to his spoken word. Bless the
Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do
his will. Bless the Lord, all his works,
in all places of his dominion.
Bless the Lord, O my soul.*

Psalm 103: 20-22

Music is well said to be the speech of angels; in fact, nothing among the utterances allowed to man is felt to be so divine. It brings us near to the infinite - Thomas Carlyle

Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.
Luke 15:10