

In 1966, Simon & Garfunkel recorded a song called '7 O'Clock News/Silent Night.'

The track is just Simon & Garfunkel singing 'Silent Night,' accompanied only by a piano, and it's overdubbed by a '7 O'Clock News' bulletin of the actual events of 3 August 1966 when the Vietnam War was at its most brutal.

And, as the track progresses, the Carol becomes fainter, and the news report louder.

It chronicles the conflicts, violence, and injustices that occurred that day.

The effect is positively chilling; and it's a grim, and ironic comment on the state of the world on that day in 1966.

Although it could have been any day in the history of the world, because there never seems to have been a time that's experienced: "A peace that has no end." [Is. 9: 7](#)

It could have been the day that Jesus was born, as the time He was born into was no different to any other.

He, and his family lived in a country occupied by the forces of the Roman Empire.

The Emperor in Rome issued an order that a census of his Empire had to be taken, which meant people had to go back to their family town to be registered: no extenuating circumstances, no excuses; everyone had to go.

So, when she was in the ninth month of her pregnancy, Mary and Joseph had to travel on foot and donkey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, a distance of some 80 miles.

And, after that exhausting journey, when they reach Bethlehem, Mary goes into labour: but it's so full of people that they can't find anywhere to stay, so they have to bed down in a cattle shed

There, the Son of God is born, and placed in a manger – a livestock feed trough.

God the Son became a tiny, helpless baby.

We all get caught up in the rat-race, which is the secular Christmas; but I believe everyone is searching for something true, beautiful, and everlasting in our lives.

Don't get me wrong; there's absolutely nothing wrong with having a good time, and giving presents at Christmas.

But if all it amounts to is a hangover, and an empty heart on the day after Christmas, then where's the good news in that?

"Don't be afraid! I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Saviour - the Lord - has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!" [Lk. 2: 10 – 11](#)

This was God's message to the shepherds, and is God's message to us today.

The 'Good News' – no, the best news – that: "God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." [Jn. 3: 16](#)

That first reading we heard from Isaiah is, to me, like the Simon & Garfunkel song, because it was written at a time when everything was going wrong for God's people.

The din of the world was trying to drown out the hope that a Saviour would come.

For a son is born to us, they cry, in hope: he will be a Wonder-Counsellor, like King Solomon; a mighty warrior, like King David; an Eternal-Father; someone who will reign a long time, and a Prince who brings peace.

This was the anthem, really, of God's people, sung in a dark world looking for a King of light; looking for the perfect King.

So, the people sang and sang for decades, for centuries; but that song became fainter as events in the world seemed to overwhelm them, and make a mockery of their hope.

Then, one night, away from the palace or temple, a child was born.

Not just any child, but THE son Isaiah saw in his prophecy, being given to the people who walk in darkness in every era in the history of the world.

All of the longing of the centuries culminated in the song of Heaven's Armies singing the praises of the Son of God, lying in a manger about five miles from Jerusalem at Bethlehem.

We gather each Christmas to sing the familiar Carols; and, one of its attractions is that they bring back memories of Christmases when we were young.

When life seemed much simpler and innocent, before we grew up, and outgrew the Baby Jesus – we think.

But, remember, Jesus grew up too.... and He calls us to follow Him as adults whatever our age is, whatever the circumstances of our life.

The good news of this night is, as the Angel says: "A joy to be shared by the whole people." Lk. 2: 10
For when we encounter Jesus, it does bring great joy: but, for this to happen, we must have an open heart that allows us to be found by the Lord.

He is the Lord; and He will tell me what He has for me, because the Lord doesn't look at us all together, as one mass of humanity.

No! He looks at each one of our faces, in the eyes, because His love isn't an abstract love: it's a concrete love for you.

So, this evening, let yourself be found by the Lord.

And, to be found by Jesus is precisely this: to let yourself be loved by the Lord!

For: "Love came down at Christmas, love all lovely, love divine; love was born at Christmas, star and angels gave the sign." Christina Rossetti: Love Came Down At Christmas