

In December of 2018 I wrote a little Christmas reflection that was originally written as a social media post.

2018 was one of the worst years of my life. My son was in the hospital for nearly three months and spent another six months home with us for ongoing care.

Both my parents declined and needed to be moved. My mom died shortly after the move.

I was a little short on Christmas spirit that year. But you kind of have to go on with things, especially when you work in the church. So we went to a Christmas party that turned out to be fun. We had our Sunday school Christmas program. And I went to a cool concert at First Plymouth church in Lincoln.

And I realized there were different kinds of Christmas Spirit, each one described by its own Christmas carol.

One kind of Christmas spirit is the Joy to the World Spirit. That's the joy of fun Christmas gatherings, the excited eyes of a child, the joy of the shepherds and the joy of the angels singing Glory to God!

Another kind of Christmas Spirit is the Silent Night kind. That's a more sentimental, quiet one. It's the Christmas Spirit of candlelit worship services and softly fallen snow. It's the Christmas Spirit of the quiet after all the celebrations. It's the Christmas spirit of the quiet, awe of that little baby sleeping in a manger next to his exhausted parents.

But then there's the Christmas Spirit of the third verse of It Came Upon a Midnight Clear. It goes like this:

3. And you, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow,
look now! for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
and hear the angels sing!

Christmas of December 2018 for me was almost entirely a third verse of It Came Upon a Midnight Clear kind of spirit.

It's the kind of Christmas Spirit that are all we have some years. But what I've come to realize is that pretty much every year will have a little of all three kinds of spirit. Because that's just how life is.

No matter which Christmas Spirit speaks loudest for you right now, it's all OK. Whether you are in an exuberant joy to the world place, a more meditative Silent Night place, or you feel like you're beneath life's crushing load, Jesus was born...for you. And no matter where you are this year, may you all hear the angels sing.