



Advent Vespers Devotional 2020

Monday, December 22
Angels We Have Heard on High
Stanzas 1 & 2

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song?
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.

— French Carol; tr. H.F. Henry, *The Crown of Jesus Music*, 1864

Egg. Shell. Seas.

Our Sunday School teachers would teach us to pronounce “excelsis” by singing “egg shell seas” each year as we rehearsed for the annual Christmas pageant. We always pronounced the word correctly but would ruin the song by snickering. Only we knew our secret. The audience thought we were angelic, but we were just singing about egg shell seas, whatever and wherever those were. And every year our teachers would ask, “Why are you laughing?” What a silly question!

The shepherds would have laughed with us. They knew our jubilee. They knew what made our joyous strains prolong and what inspired our heavenly song. It wasn't proper piety. It was sheer giddiness. They knew why we laughed. They too were used to being asked silly questions. I can hear them now, “Why this jubilee? Why our joyous strains? What are the gladsome tidings inspiring this song? What a silly question!”

And I can hear their answer, “We once were lost, but now we have been found. Your religious practices have refused us entry into the temple to worship our God, but now this God has come to us here in the fields. You might consider us too unclean for your pageants, but the God of egg shell seas has come to us. Gloria!”

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