

GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN

Traditional 18th c. English Carol

"*God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen*", also known as "*God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*", and "*God Rest You Merry People All*", is an English traditional Christmas carol. It was first published in 1833 when it appeared in "*Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern*," a collection of seasonal carols gathered by William B. Sandys, although the author is unknown. The arrangement generally used for this carol today first appeared in the 1871 collection, "*Christmas Carols New and Old*" by Sir John Stainer and the Reverend H.R. Bramley. Apart From "*God Rest You Merry Gentlemen*" their compilation also included Stainer's arrangements of what were to become the standard versions of "*Good King Wenceslas*," "*The First Nowell*" and "*What Child is This?*" among others.

Charles Dickens would include the song in his 1843 classic, "A Christmas Carol". This song was popular during that time because of its strong message. Each Christmas, we greet each other with the word, 'merry', meaning 'happy'. In the Middle Ages, the word 'merry' meant 'great and mighty' i.e.; Robin Hood's merry men meant 'mighty men'. And, the word 'rest' meant 'make'. Traditionally, early century church songs were dark and somber. Even at Christmas songs were not allowed to be joyful. So, often town people would dance to the songs in the streets. Historians say that the night watchmen of that time, would be singing to those who passed by, "*God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*", meaning, "*God make you mighty, gentlemen*".

This song was first recorded by Bing Crosby on the gramophone. Others who recorded it are Perry Como, Nat King Cole, Ella Fitzgerald, Mannheim Steamroller, Neil Diamond and Rascal Flatts.

~Tull