

## Fourth Day of Christmas, 12/28 – Four Calling Birds



**Scripture:** Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” **Matthew 28:16-20**

It’s so interesting how language gets changed over time. Madame becomes ma’am. Breaking the fast (not eating) becomes breakfast. And “colly birds” become “calling birds.”

Some say the word origin of the four birds in our beloved song were colly birds. Or black birds. The word colly has its roots in the Old English word col or coal. So, at some point the receivers of this little ditty would have understood that these four birds were blackbirds. As the song comes to us today we sing calling birds. I need to use some of my own imagination here, but certainly the words sound similar but I think it’s more than that. **One of the symbolic understandings of the four birds is that they represent the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.** The gospel is good news.

In one of the last recorded conversations Jesus has with his disciples, he tells them to go to all nations and share what Jesus had taught them and that he would be with them. We talk about the work we do as a “calling”. Sometimes we hear evangelists “calling” people to a life of faith in Christ. I wonder if that’s how calling birds ended up in our song today.

So, if the gospel we believe in is good news, how do we share that with others? It's the goodness of faith, hope and love again, coming through the Old and New Testaments to share the true Love that is Jesus the Christ, come to earth to save us. I am thankful for the gospels.