

Psalm 98 // Joy to The World

Carols Series, Message #1

I start off by singing the Carol, and after it I go straight to this:

Intro: Joy to the world is a Hymn that was written nearly 300 years ago, **296 years ago to be exact**. Isaac Watts wrote the hymn based on Psalm 98.

- Little did he know that *JTTW* would become the most popular Christmas Carol of the 20th century, and would be translated into dozens of languages.
- What did Isaac Watts see in Psalm 98 that inspired this powerful Carol that shouts Joy To The World? He saw a beautiful natural crescendo / **in Psalm 98 seas roar, rivers clap their hands, and hills sing**, but why?

Psalm 98:4

4 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

5 Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody!

6 With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord!

7 Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who dwell in it!

8 Let the rivers clap their hands;
let the hills sing for joy together

9 before the Lord, for he comes
to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity. Or fairly.

I know the Christmas Carol, and this Psalm may sound naïve,

- When we were kids we would sing Christmas carols and be jolly, but we've grown up, and we now get to see the world for what it really is, and think to ourselves, "**is it still possible to sing Joy To The World?**"

How can we make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth?

- Why break forth into joyous song and sing praises? (Verse 4 of Psalm 98, and verse 1 of the Carol)
- Why make a joyful noise before the King / the Lord? (Verse 5&6)
- How should the sea roar in gladness, and all that fills it?
- Why should the world and those who dwell in it roar as well? (Verse 7); **BECAUSE:**

1) Christmas is that God became man! Everything else is add-ons... **He that made man became man. Joy to the world! The Lord is come.**

- **Jesus is the deity of God living in humanity**; we call that **incarnation**. ("For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" Colossians 2:9)
- Jesus wasn't just another baby, **the Christmas baby is God made man**. – "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" Colossians 1:19

It was evident that Jesus wasn't "just another baby" when He was born:

- When Christ was born: Wise man "crossed the border" just to come see Jesus and worship Him. (**Donald Trump joke?**)
- When Christ was born: Real angels came down from heaven to announce His birth....
- When Christ was born, the biggest star in heaven lined up **His way**, and not only that, but the Bible says the star actually rested over the place where Jesus was
- Jesus's birth wasn't just another birth, when Christ was born Shepherds literally hurried to see Him, and after they saw Him, they couldn't stop repeating "**Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!**", and the amazing thing is that **all who heard the shepherds marveled at what the shepherds told them about Jesus**. (Luke 2:18); this wasn't just a new baby in town, this was **God in the manger, God**

went from God the Spirit to God the man, from God in heaven, to God with us / Emanuel! / No wonder Psalm 98 says the earth roared; your maker is with you again, of course the earth sings; and so should we.

“Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
Let earth receive her king;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing,”

What do we primarily see in God coming to us? **We see God’s initiative in loving us**, / we see God’s initiative to come and end the suffering we have created for ourselves rebelling against our maker. **God has always taken the first step in loving us.** He loved us first, and proves so by coming to us.

- **Salvation is always the coming of God to man. Man does not ascend to God; God descends to man. We see God’s undeserved love in making a way to Him for sinners like you and I.**
- BTW NO other religion has God humbling himself; you always have God requiring mankind to “be better” and “do more” in order for man to be accepted. But in Christianity / in Christ you have God humbling and coming to us, to take away our sins so that those who believe and trust their lives to Him may worship God and enjoy Him forever.
- If God were to ask you or me to become a worm, it would still not compare to Him humbling himself and taking human form; **we can humble ourselves to the fact that Christ is the only way to God, because He humbled Himself to love us so much that He became man to take our sin, and take us to God.**
- Let every heart this Christmas prepare Him room.

“Joy to the world! The Lord is come;

What else can we see was in the mind of Isaac Watt as he read Psalm 98 and wrote this Carol? He writes:

He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,

Far as, far as, the curse is found.

You see Isaac Watts knew it ain’t so easy to sing Joy To The World in a broken world. He just acknowledged 3 times that there is a curse in this world....

- Isaac himself was plague by disease; his physical illness got to the point where he couldn’t pastor anymore...
- He was also rejected when he proposed marriage to his bride to be (nothing as embarrassing and disheartening as when you say “would you marry me”, and you get a big “hell no”);
- He also faced constant opposition about his work by those both inside the church and outside the church
- Here is a guy that knows where you are coming from...
- So how in the world did this guy write “**Joy To The World**”? It was the way of preaching the hope of the gospel to himself / it was his fight for the ultimate joy there is, His name is Jesus!

I wonder if you are feeling the curse of humanity’s rejection to God today?

How is this world broken for you today?

What are you plagued with this Christmas?

- Maybe this past year you’ve lost a child...
- Or maybe you are carrying the weight of a dark secret of unconfessed sin...
- Or perhaps this was the year of a relationship that didn’t work out, similar to what happened to Isaac Watts; that really hurts
- I know pain too... can’t even get into all the pain in my past here, but... I’ve had lost not one but two children...
- I’ve had a loved one with stage 3 cancer and gotten those news at Christmas time...
- I’ve moved nearly 40 times in my life and I’m not even 40 yet...
- I know what it is to live really poor and not know what you are going to be able to even eat next....
- How can I, how can Isaac Watts, how can you sing Joy To The World then? **Precisely because Christmas is the revelation that:**

2) In Christ pain and sin will never have the last word.

Yes there is a curse, but there is ONE Savior that took it all, and took it so far, so far from us, that because of Him you and I won't ever see that curse again in eternity.

Listen, in Christ, your life has the crescendo of Psalm 98! ... yes, this body of flesh may fail and wither, but the inner being grows each day stronger in The Lord who is making all things new (in the words of Paul in 2 Co. 4:16 "*Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.*"). And instead of the believer's life going downhill and ending 6 feet under ground, in Christ all of life goes uphill until we embrace the savior's arms in the paradise we had lost, but will get back in Jesus.

- I know eternity boggles our minds, it's a long time, it's literally for ever, but listen, in Christ eternity is like a great book where each chapter is way better than the one before.
- Did you know that when this Carol was written, Isaac Watts was actually thinking of the second coming of Christ and not just the first? That's right, this hymn was written about the return of Jesus. Because The King of heaven came down, and will return again, the hope of heaven is true for you, and me, and all who believe.

--- Great news about heaven ---

Can't I just talk to you for a minute about that glorious new heaven and new earth? Revelation 21 says: "2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

- It means heaven is beautiful, you know how long a bride prepares for her wedding day, and brides look beautiful, imagine a place prepared by God Himself! it'll reflect the stunning beauty of our maker.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

- No more racism, nor more hatred, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, (Gal. 5:19) no more sickness, no more death, no more debts, no more natural disasters, no more wars...

- No more hospitals, no more funerals, no more graveyards, no more mass shootings, no more sickness, and no more pain. **All because the savior came.**

Heaven is beautiful, it is perfect, and it is a real place that the angel could measure (verses 15 & 16), and heaven it's a secure (verses 17-21). Absolutely nothing to fear anymore, Joy To the Word!

- **And even saw, the beauty of heaven does not compare to the God of heaven.** And that's exactly what Jesus came to give you at Christmas time, not something from God, but a restored relationship **with God Himself.** Heaven is for you.
- Fear not, and surrender to Christ, that you too, even in the midst of suffering right now, can also sing this Christmas, "Joy to the world, precisely because The Lord has come! He took my curse."

The fact that Christ became man, tells you, he knows your pain! He's been there and then some.... But this too shall pass, in Christ you get a new heaven and a new earth. He is the one who makes all things new.

3. Jesus became like us so that we could be like Him. The Son of God became like us, that He would make us sons and daughters of God. That cute little baby Jesus in the manger **is the glory of the invisible God.** Hebrews puts it this way: He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. Hebrews 1:3, 4

- Guys, the birth of Jesus is more than a supernatural display of God's power becoming man, **the birth had a clear purpose, that Jesus would lead us to God.** The Carol says: He comes to make His blessings flow, and what's the greatest blessing in life and death? God Himself. **The greatest blessing is not the absence of trials this Christmas, but the presence and company of God with us / Emanuel.** Joy To The Word.
- In the words of the theologian, "The incarnation has a goal. The goal is not just to bring God to man nor for divinity to take on humanity. The ultimate purpose is for humanity to put on divinity, for created man to be deified." Athanasius **We can only put on God, through faith and full trust in Jesus Christ alone.**

- The purpose of the baby is the all-satisfying Glory of God, and saving grace for humanity.
- At Christmas, Jesus became the human that understands your pain, and at the same time the one who came to take away your biggest sorrow, the sin that keeps you separated from God.
- The cross was possible because the birth was undeniable.

Finally

4. The Lord Jesus Christ came to reveal God to us.

There is only two things you can do about the revelation of God in Christ: **One**, you can repent and believe, and trust Jesus. **Or two**, you can rebel, and continue to pretend you can somehow save yourself through good deeds, and service, and devotion to good causes....

Illus: I have three atheist friends whom I love dearly, and something that never ceases to strike me, it's this time a year for them.

- One year I called one of them during Christmas time, and said, "bro they are playing Christmas Carols everyone, with lyrics full of Jesus; you must hate this time a year don't you?", his response was, "actually I love Christmas Carols", --- and I was like, "bro, can you stop to consider what your are singing?"
- I was at a celebration earlier this week, it was not a Christian celebration by any means, there were about 1000 people there, mostly none Christians, and at this Holiday party it stroke me again, that at the end, everyone started singing "Christ the savior was born... Christ the savior is born...", and I couldn't help to think "do we not see the irony", and I started praying inside of me, "Lord would these people open up their hearts to that truth".

Psalm 98 which birthed the Christmas Carol *JTTW*, ends with this:

8 Let the rivers clap their hands;
let the hills sing for joy together
9 before the Lord, for he comes
to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

Christ's first coming, and Christ's return, is great news for those who believe, but is not great news for those who reject Him. May I please plead with you this Christmas, to put your eyes on Jesus, and consider that only the Son of God is the way to God.

- I know there is a movement around the phrase "*only God can judge me*" (I've seen that phrase lately in t-shirts/bumper stickers/tattoos) and it's true, there only 1 judge right? God, and yes only God can judge us... But you are forgetting another vital truth there: He will! (✘) He will judge us. As Psalm 98 says.
- **Don't just make room for Jesus, give your whole life over to Him, because if you are found in Him, you have nothing to worry about, for He bore our sin and our shame, He bore the judgment due to us at that cross. Joy to the world!!!** Do you believe it today? Do you believe it was for you? (✘).
- The miracle of Christmas is that the **invisible** God of the universe **became visible in Jesus Christ.**
 - "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." Colossians 1:15
- Only Jesus is the perfect image of God; only Jesus is the exact representation of God; **only through Jesus we can see God and be reconciled to God, our maker.**

And believer don't forget that the Carol also encourages us in Verse 3:

"No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,"

- Yes, Jesus came to take our curse, but one sure way to throw away the joy of the work of Christ is habitual sin in our lives.
- **Would you surrender all that you are to Christ, that the joy of salvation may be restore to you this Christmas and forever?**

The Last verse of the Carol is this:

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love,
And wonders of his love,
And wonders, wonders, of his love.

It is the love of God displayed in Christ that makes you whole.

And talking about Christmas Carols, and singing, and playing instruments this Christmas: The greatest news ever / the greatest news for the entire world, you can find them, in an 8 note scale of,

- That's right; if you play say the scale of "C" backwards, and you paused in the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 6th, 7th, and last note, you will hear the greatest news ever, for this is what you will get: **Joy To The World, The Savior's Come.** (C, B, AG, F, E, D, C)
- **And that's the greatest news for humanity, ever!**

Let us pray....

Prayer: