

Joy to the World

11/10/2024

The title of today's lesson is also the title of a song most if not all of us know. It was written by Isaac Watts (17 July 1674 – 25 November 1748). Mr Watts was a was an English Congregational minister who also wrote a number of the songs we know so well. He is credited with having written some 750 hymns. While looking through our red song books I came across a dozen of his songs there. Below are a few of them which you may recognize -

Joy to the world
When I survey the wonderful cross
Come we that love the Lord (We are marching to Zion)
At the Cross
Alas and did my savior bleed

The song 'Joy to the world' begin as follows -

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n, and nature sing.

Many see this as being a song to be sung at certain times of the year. But perhaps it is not when, but how and why we should sing it. And maybe by the end of today's lesson the 'how' and 'why' just might surpass the 'when' we should sing it in your mind. Let us begin!

This song is based on Psalm 98 which reads as follows -

- 1. O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things:
his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.*
- 2. The Lord hath made known his salvation:
his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.*
- 3. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel:
all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.*
- 4. Make a **joyful noise** unto the Lord, all the earth:
make a loud noise, and **rejoice**, and sing praise.*
- 5. Sing unto the Lord with the harp;
with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.*

6. *With trumpets and sound of cornet
make a **joyful noise** before the Lord, the King.*

7. *Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;
the world, and they that dwell therein.*

8. *Let the floods clap their hands:
let the hills be **joyful** together*

9. *before the Lord;
for he cometh to judge the earth:
with righteousness shall he judge the world,
and the people with equity.*

I have highlighted the times of which the subject of joy is mentioned in this Psalm, and below are the Hebrew words from which they are translated with their meanings.

Both verses 4 & 7 'Joyful noise' = rûa' pronounced roo-ah' - A primitive root; to *mar* (especially by breaking); figuratively to *split* the ears (with sound), that is, *shout* (for alarm or joy)

Both verse 4 'Rejoice' and Verse 8 'Be joyful' - rânan pronounced raw-nan' - A primitive root; properly to *creak* (or emit a stridulous sound), that is, to *shout* (usually for joy)

Another words when you sing this Psalm do it loudly. With sound that can figuratively split one's ear. Shout it out to the point your voice cracks or creaks. And do so with joy.

Note * - Stridulous means **making a harsh, shrill, or grating noise**. For example, you might describe the sound of crickets as stridulous. The word stridulous comes from the Latin word stridulus, which means shrill or squeaky.

Of which I may ask - Can 'Joy to the world' be sung any other way?

Let us take a little time this morning to consider the Psalm on which this song 'Joy to the world' is based -

Verse 1

***O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things:
his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.***

Sing a new song. Scripture contains many songs. And new songs were often written about events that one should keep in memory. The Psalmist here calls for such a song to be sung about the marvelous things God has done because - *his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.*

Isaiah chapter 53 opens with these words - *“Who has believed our message and to whom has the **arm of the Lord** been revealed?”* What follows this question raised by Isaiah is a clear depiction of Jesus’ life, the way mankind would see him as a man, how mankind would treat him, that God himself would choose the path for Jesus’ life and details of the great victory over sin and transgression that would come of it.

Simply put - *his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory over sin.*

Now that is worthy of a new song wouldn’t you say.

Maybe something like - joy to the world the Lord hath come...

Verse 2 of Psalm 98

The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

Isaiah 52:6-10

***“Therefore my people will know my name;
therefore in that day they will know
that it is I who foretold it.***

Yes, it is I.”

*How beautiful on the mountains
are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace,
who bring good tidings,
who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion,*

“Your God reigns!”

*Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices;
together they shout for joy.*

*When the Lord returns to Zion,
they will see it with their own eyes.*

*Burst into songs of joy together,
you ruins of Jerusalem,
for the Lord has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.*

**The Lord will lay bare his holy arm
in the sight of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth will see
the salvation of our God.”**

Verse 3 Psalm 98

***He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel:
all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.***

Note the last words from the passage in Isaiah above.

And Isaiah 52:6 above began with these words - ***“Therefore my people will know my name; therefore in that day they will know that it is I who foretold it. Yes, it is I.”***

The promise to Israel of a new covenant was announced to them by the prophet Jeremiah more than a century after the words of Isaiah were written. Here is that promise -

Jeremiah 31:31-34

*“The days are coming,” declares the Lord,
“when I will make a new covenant
with the people of Israel
and with the people of Judah.*

*It will not be like the covenant
I made with their ancestors
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
though I was a husband to them,”
declares the Lord.*

*“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel
after that time,” declares the Lord.*

*“I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.*

*I will be their God,
and they will be my people.*

***No longer will they teach their neighbor,
or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest,”
declares the Lord.***

*“For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more.”*

Part of entering this New Covenant of God is to confess the name of Jesus and know who He is.

Verses 4-6 Psalm 98

***Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth:
make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.
Sing unto the Lord with the harp;
with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.
With trumpets and sound of cornet
make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King.***

Here we have the call to make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Then it describes how to do that - Sing, harps, trumpets, cornet. We should note this is how they were to make a joyful noise at that time.

The Old Covenant would be replaced with a New Covenant as prophesied by Jeremiah. The Hebrew writer in chapter 10 writes this about Jesus -

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,

but a body you prepared for me;

with burnt offerings and sin offerings

you were not pleased.

Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—

I have come to do your will, my God.’”

First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them”—though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Hebrews 10:5-10)

Thus by Jesus dying and rising again the New Covenant was set into place, just as Isaiah and Jeremiah had described.

So how should we celebrate in this New Covenant? Paul in his letter to the Ephesians writes this in Ephesians 5:1-2 5 *“Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”*

Paul then proceeds to describe how we can walk in the way of love. Note what he says in the verses below about the subject at hand in Psalm 98:5

Ephesians 5:19-20 *“speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. **Sing and make music** (melody) **from** (in) **your heart to the Lord**, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

And James 5:13 *“Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.”*

Psalm 98 verses 7-8

***Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;
the world, and they that dwell therein.***

***Let the floods clap their hands:
let the hills be joyful together***

Let Heaven and nature sing kind of sums it up!

Psalm 98 verse 9

“before the Lord;

for he cometh to judge the earth:

***with righteousness shall he judge the world,
and the people with equity.”***

The God of creation deserves praise from all his creation. For He is both savior and judge of the world.

The following are the words of another song written by Isaac Watts which I think fit well here. They speak of the price paid for our sins.

1. When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.
2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.
3. See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
4. Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

So when and how might we sing about this saving grace brought to us by God through Christ Jesus -

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heav'n and nature sing,

When is the right time to have the message of God written on your heart. God invites you to do so now as we stand and sing.