

“CAROLS FOR THE KING: JOY TO THE WORLD”

PSALM 98 AND ASSORTED SCRIPTURES

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Carols For The King! Carols and songs of Christmas fill the air. Ours is a faith which sings and whether you are on a street corner or in a sanctuary, in a shopping mall or an office building or even on a battlefield, the songs of Christmas encourage us, inspire us, inspiring our faith, encouraging our hope and these great songs, hymns of Christmas provide the setting and the melody for the greatest story ever told, the story of Jesus Christ. And so the reason that I've chosen 5 great hymns of Christmas to share is from a biblical perspective to help us understand the message of the songs and the meaning of Christmas. One of our men today was conversing about his days BC, before Christ, he was not raised in a Christian home and He said, "I remember singing some of these songs at Christmas and even some of these songs of faith and hymns and carols at Christmas and I didn't have a clue as to what they meant." Well, certainly there are many people who don't know the meaning of the songs or the hymns and even in the family of God those of us who know Jesus Christ so often we repeat the words and we play lip service rather than give heart worship to the songs that we sing. And so at this Christmas season, not only do I want us to sing the songs as never before but I want us to see the songs as we've never seen them before and to share the message behind the music.

70,000 people will walk into this building over the next 13 a..., performances of the Dallas Christmas Festival and all of them will hear the great message and music of Christmas because it is the music that is so attractive and so appealing and calls people to come and worship our God and so the ultimate purpose of this message series is to bring us face to face with the King who has come and that we might worship Him with heart and soul and voice. This is biblical, you know, to sing songs of praise and worship to our God. In fact there is an entire book in the Bible that is actually a hymnbook. It's called the book of Psalms, great Psalms of faith. In fact you can begin finding right now the 98th Psalm, because the 98th Psalm provides the backdrop, the inspiration for the writing of this great hymn that we consider today, which is, *Joy To The World*. There are songs surrounding the birth of Christ, whether it is the great magnificent of Mary as she a..., presented herself and offered herself to the work of the Holy Spirit when she was great with child and she carried the Messiah and cradled Him in a manger. When the angels rejoiced and the glories of God were sung in the heavens, it was with song that the birthday of the King was celebrated and so lets begin today with Psalm 98 and verse 4:

⁴Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Break forth in song, rejoice and sing praises. ⁵Sing to the LORD with the harp, and with the harp and sound and a psalm. ⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn; shout joyfully before the LORD, the King.

That was the beginning of shout to the Lord, right there. And then verse 7:

⁷Let the sea roar, and all of its fullness, The world and those who dwell in it; ⁸And let the rivers, clap their

hands, Let the hills be joyful together before the Lord,

Does this sound familiar? This is *Joy To The World*, biblical style. Verse 9:

For His is coming to judge the earth, ~~When righteousness or~~ With righteousness He shall judge the world, And the peoples with equity.

Joy To The World! If you read the newspaper or watch the evening news there's not much joy in the world today. A..., instead there is terror and terrorism, there is shame and scandal and sin and sorrow and death and fear; oh maybe some fun and games and a little bit of laughter and some extreme pleasures from time to time but not true lasting joy. The joy that is given to the world is the joy that is found in Jesus Christ. Isaac Watts wrote the words to this great hymn 300 years ago and it became the great carol of Christmas. He did not write it as a Christmas tune or a Christmas rather a..., there is only a veiled reference to the first coming of Christ in this song. This song primarily speaks of the return of Jesus Christ, when He comes again to reign and rule upon the earth and so this song, not only deals with Christmas, the Christ who has come, but when you sing it remember that it re...refers to the King who is coming again. Psalm 98 was written to describe the care and the provision for God for His people Israel and the promise of His reign and His rule upon the earth. Therefore let us celebrate and rejoice, let there be joy in the world.

Isaac Watts, as a young man became dissatisfied with the music of the church. The music of the church at that time was very monotonous and dirge like, it sounded more like a funeral than a fellowship of the church and so as a teenager he began to complain to his pastor father about the music. He watched his sleepy congregations did not participate in the worship of the King and so when he complained, one day, rather vociferously to his father, his father said, "All right Isaac then why don't you write some better songs to sing?" Isaac must have said to himself, I can do that, because he wrote his first hymn that very week and presented it to the congregation the following Sunday and they loved it. They loved the enthusiasm and the joy of the music that he presented and so for the next several years young Isaac Watts began writing hymns about 2 a week. He began publishing those hymns and ultimately he wrote and published over 60 hymns. He became known as the father of English hymnody and therefore he is a well known man, not only in England but around the world. He's known as Sir Isaac Watts. And so he wrote these hymns. Now not everyone liked the hymns, the songs that he wrote. Some people considered them to be too contemporary, [pause for congregation laughter] too repetitious, like:

Repeat the sounding joy.

Repeat the sounding joy.

Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

[pause for more laughter] Some even considered the hymns irreverent and even irreligious and yet these contemporary songs and hymns that he wrote, many have endured through the generations. Songs like, *We're Marching To Zion* and *Oh God Our Help In Ages Past, Our Strength In Years To Come*, and then the great hymn, *When I Survey The Wondrous Cross* and then again, the wonderful hymn, *At The Cross* and another, *Am I A Soldier Of The Cross, A Follower Of The Lamb?* And of course, *Joy To The World, The Lord Has Come*.

Let's look at this hymn today and discover how we can know that joy in our world. **THE FIRST STANZA SPEAKS OF THE INCARNATION OF THE KING**. Incarnation meaning God in the flesh, when Christ became a man, the incarnation of the King, the great King of Glory, God Almighty stepped in to human flesh. Therefore Isaac Watts put it this way in the hymn:

*Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
And 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.*

Let every heart prepare a room for the King. The incarnation and the preparation for the coming of Christ. Not everyone prepared for the King. The innkeeper wasn't quite prepared was he? He was enjoying lining his pockets with the good business due to the census that was taken. His house was full and so because he had no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn he sent them out back and Jesus was born in a stable. It wasn't that this man was a wicked man, he was just a man caught up in his own world and in his own business and the indifference. Imagine the Savior was born in his own backyard and he didn't even know it. Herod, the wicked king did not embrace or prepare to receive the Savior of the world, the King, because he considered Jesus to be a rival king and he would not stand for a rival king in those...therefore he attempted to assassinate Jesus even when he was a small child and it brought about the killing of the innocence and the wailing of Israel. Not many welcomed Him at first, just a few. A few like a senior saint by the name of Simeon.

The story of Simeon is really one of the most beautiful of all the Christmas stories. Simeon was a deeply spiritual man and sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit and because he prayed and because he listened to God, God told Simeon a secret and that secret was a promise, a promise that he would not die, Simeon would not see death until he saw the salvation, the coming of the Messiah into the world. Now can you imagine keeping that kind of a secret? He must have gotten up every day thinking this could be the day, this is the day when the Messiah will come. And the years passed, but then that day of day came when Mary and Joseph brought the Little Child, Jesus, into the temple and there Simeon saw Him. The promise was fulfilled. The prayer was answered. Simeon took into his own arms the Savior and prepared a place for Him. He was a prepared man for the Savior who was come. Therefore he said, now Lord let your servant depart in peace: [Luke 2:30]

For mine eyes have seen Your glory, Your salvation.

He waited and he wanted that moment to come and so when it came he was ready for the miracle to be placed in his life. Say, are you ready for that miracle today? Are you prepared for the miracle of Christ in your life, the incarnation of God in Christ? Because God left heaven and came to earth so that you could go to heaven. The miracle of the infinite becoming an infant, the God of glory, Almighty God laid in a manger. Majesty was in that manger and the majesty of King Jesus is in our hearts. The King has come! *Joy to the world! The Lord is come*, and I can tell you there's no great joy in your life, there will be no lasting joy in your life until you have received the King. You can never sing, really sing, until you know the King and His name is Jesus. John chapter 1 in verse 11 **[should be verse 12]** said:

But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the children of God, even to them who believe on His name.

He came into His own and His own he...did not receive Him.

But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to be called the children of God,...

Have you received the King? Have you welcomed Him? Some people have no time for the King. They're like the innkeeper that are just too busy for Jesus, too busy making money, too busy just trying to live your life, but you'll never have purpose and meaning into your life until you know Jesus. Some do not want a rival King because they have built their own kingdoms and their own world and they don't want a rival king, they're like Herod who did not welcome the King and yet there are others who will invite Christ and embrace Him and say like Simeon. Today, with my own eyes and my own heart I have received the King.

The first stanza is about incarnation, we have joy because the King has come. **THE SECOND STANZA IS ABOUT ADORATION.** There is joy when we worship the King. Not only do we receive the King but we rejoice in the King. We praise the King. Listen to the stanza:

*Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns;
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains*

Sounds like the Psalm doesn't it?

*Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.*

The King is to be adored. Oh worship the King! My prayer is that, this season that we call Christmas, will be full of genuine worship. Not just running around buying gifts, fighting the crowds at the mall, but rather to truly worship our God and Savior Jesus Christ. Remember this, Jesus said to some of His followers, if you don't worship me, the rocks will rise up and worship Me. He will be worshipped.

Paul tells us in Philippians chapter 2 that one day:

¹⁰...every knee will bow...¹¹and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God.

Have you bowed your knee to the King who has come and who is coming again? You'll either bow your knee in adoration or you will bow your knee in judgment if you don't receive Him, but you will bow the knee to Jesus. ~~Let me re...~~let me remind you that worship is not just for weekends when we show up at church, pay our respects to God and then go back to life as usual. For the Christian who has received the joy of Jesus worship is a way of life. Worship is the way we live because our hearts are full of the Savior. He reigns, He rules within us. Some have received Christ as Savior but He does not reign as King and Lord of your life. Isaac Watts knew the joy of Jesus because he was a

worshipper, he worshiped the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a learned cleric and obviously a prodigious hymn writer and yet Isaac Watts suffered a major disappointment in his life. It seems that there was a woman by the name of Elizabeth Singer. Now, Elizabeth was inspired by the hymns of Isaac Watts. She was so inspired that she began writing him letters and told him, I am your biggest fan. She was a...sorta a 18th Century groupie, you might say. [pause for slight congregation laughter] She loved Isaac Watts because of his hymns. Well, Isaac began writing her back and for the next 2 years they corresponded. It was kinda like a chat room, I guess, a long time ago. And in the correspondence a romance began and they began expressing their love for one another. And ultimately Elizabeth and this is a little reverse field here, but Elizabeth purposed marriage to Isaac and sh...and he accepted. Now remember they'd never met, it was all by mail. She was a mail order bride. [pause for congregation laughter] And he accepted the proposal and so she rushed to his side, traveled to meet him for the first time and when she met Isaac for the first time and their eyes fastened on one another, she looked and was so disappointed, she turned around and went home. [pause for more laughter] Elizab...Elizabeth Singer would later write these words about Isaac Watts.

"He was only 5 feet tall with a shallow face and a hooked nose, prominent cheekbones, small eyes and a deathlike color." [pause for slight congregation laughter]

Elizabeth Singer broke off the engagement. She could not look beyond the external to see the great heart of Isaac Watts. And Isaac Watts was so heart ~~broken~~...broken, by the rejection, so disappointed that it was a deep disappointment for the rest of his life and he never knew the joy of companionship of a wife or a woman all the days of his life. He just poured his life into his ministry and into his music. It's ironic isn't it? That the man who gave us the song, *Joy To The World*, never knew the joy of a family and of a loving wife. Isaac Watts wasn't very big. He wasn't strong and vigorous. He wasn't tall, dark and handsome. But he had a great heart for God and his words have inspired the hearts of Christians throughout the generations, because he knew a joy, a joy that the world didn't give to him and the world couldn't take away. It was an out of this world joy, the joy of the King and he spent his life in adoration and in celebration of the King. *Joy To The World!* Do you know that joy? Do you know the joy that Jesus gives? He said in John chapter 15 and verse 11:

"My joy I give to you. Not as the world gives give I unto you."

That joy was once described in a powerful way as being:

"The echo of God in the human heart."

Joy is the echo of God's life within us and when the life of our Lord lives and reigns within us, there is joy.

*Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.*

All of creation worships God. Let Christians with heart and soul and voice worship our King.

THE 3RD STANZA DEALS WITH LIBERATION. Liberation for the...the stanza reads like this:

*No more let sin and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found,
Far, far as the curse is found.*

Unusual words wouldn't you think? All about a curse at Christmas. Heh, heh, ah..., we don't sing this song or this stanza at Christmas very often and yet the very essence of what Christmas is about is in the 3rd stanza. [Matthew 1:21]

You shall call His name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins.

The curse, the consequences of sin. The curse, every person on planet earth lives under the darkness and the death of this curse. It is the curse of judgment. It is the curse of sin within. It is that infernal battle that we fight within. Now I know that we live in a time where we magnify self-esteem, everybody wants to feel really good about themselves and we have a host of secular psychologist and counselors and even religious leaders who tell us that the ultimate goal in life is discovering your self-esteem. Well we live in a generation that feels better about itself then perhaps any other generation but at the same time the moral fabric of our culture is unraveling, because while we feel better about ourselves, we're not really better, because sin is alive and well on planet earth and in the human heart and there are consequences to sin. [Galatians 6:7]

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows that he will also reap.

And if: [Hosea 8:7]

...you sow the wind...

The Bible says:

... you will reap the whirlwind.

And so many people have fallen into the depths and the depravity, to the curse, to the consequences of this great sin and sorrow and death that is within. Sin that promises pleasure but delivers pain. Sin that promises life but gives death. Sin, the curse must be dealt with and that is why God became a man in Jesus Christ. When God wanted to deliver man from sin, sorrow and death, when He determined to defeat the curse, the darkness His ultimate weapon was to send a Baby into the world and that Baby grew to be a Man, the perfect God Man, the Savior of the world and He hung on a cross. Galatians 3 says:

Cursed is everyone who hangs on a cross.

And Jesus took the curse and the condemnation for our sins, your sin and mine. He bore the pain. He took the judgment and therefore now the blessings flow, the blessings of salvation, the blessings of new life, the blessings of joy and peace and forgiveness. The blessings flow as far as the curse is found. The curse is found everywhere isn't it? But salvation is now available as far as the curse is

found. No matter how far you may go into sin the grace of God goes farther still. The blessings of God hunt us down.

Remember the story of the prodigal son? That young man who rebelled against the father, demanded his own way, took his fortune and went to the far country and threw it all away in the far country. He wasted his life, ended up in a pigpen, no money, no friends, filthy, dirty, despicable. Jesus said in this great short story called the parable of the prodigal son that this young man came to himself that day and when he came to himself he said, I will arise and go to my father. I'll go back, not as a son because surely he would never give me the status of a son again, but I'll go back as a slave. But I gotta get back to my father. And so with dirty cloths and all he began the long journey back home and in the mean time the loving, faithful father waits for the son to come home. Every day he'd look for him and then the day came as the father was perhaps standing in the front yard, he looked down the long winding road, the path in front of him and he saw a lonely disheveled figure coming his way, he realized that's my boy. Jesus said, that father ran to him. It's a picture of God the Father in a hurry to welcome home those who come to Him, those who come back to Him. It's what Isaac Watts was singing about, talking about when he said the:

...blessings flow as far as the curse is found,

No matter how far you go and how deep the sin and rebellion against God, the blessings flow wherever the curse extends, wherever there is sin and sorrow and death there is salvation and liberation. This curse is a bitter curse. It is a binding curse, but the curse is broken by the power of Jesus Christ.

My greatest joy as a pastor is seeing God break that curse in the lives of people by changing their hearts through a new birth and a new life in Christ. I've seen it again and again and again, thousands of times, as far as the curse may go. I've seen people cursed by alcohol, made clean by the power of Jesus Christ. Cursed by sexual sin and addictions, made pure by the liberating presence of Jesus Christ in their lives. Cursed by pornography. Cursed by fear. Cursed by sorrow. Cursed by death. Changed by Jesus Christ. That's what Watts wrote about so long ago and that's why there is joy in forgiveness. You don't have to live in the sorrow and the brokenness and the bitterness of the curse, but in the joy of Christ.

THE FINAL STANZA, CONCERNS CORONATION and it inspires us to worship the Savior where He reigns and when He reigns there is great joy. That's why we read:

*He rules the world with truth and grace,
He makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love, And wonders of His love,
And wonders, and wonders [heh] of His love.*

I like that phrase He reigns in grace and truth. It reminds me of the 1st chapter of John in verse 14 and the Scripture tells us that Jesus when He became a Man, came full of grace and truth. Now we live in a world in which our culture is suggesting that there is no absolute truth. You can only know your truth. Truth is what works for you and therefore the ultimate goal of life should be to tolerate all

truth on an equal plain. And it is politically incorrect in a pluralistic society, they say, to claim that you know truth, especially the truth of the One who said:

[John 14:6]

... *"I am the way and the truth and the life..."*

So it is the ultimate sin, social sin, if you will, to suggest that you know real truth and yet Jesus came in truth. He reigns in truth and when Christ reigns in the second re...coming of Jesus, everyone will know that truth of who He is and that He alone is Savior and Lord and God. But that truth about Jesus Christ offers grace to everyone on the planet. The truth of Jesus Christ tells us that the wonders of His love and salvation is available to everyone. The sinful woman, the one who was caught in the very act of adultery, dragged to the feet of Jesus, she deserved to be stoned according to the law. The proud Pharisees said, Jesus what do you think? Endeavoring to entrap Him, Jesus picked up some st...a..., began a..., picked up a few stones, He began writing in the dirt, we don't know what he wrote. Perhaps writing the sins of those who accused this woman, because He knew their hearts. He said: [John 8:7]

... *"Let you who have no sin, cast the first stone."*

And one by one they walked away: [Romans 3:23]

because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

That's truth, that's...that's the hard truth. But then the woman who remained looked at Jesus and there He saw the glistening love in His eyes. He said: [John 8:10]

... *"Woman, where...where are your accusers...?"*

I can just see a smile on His face, woman where'd they go? [John 8:11]

She said, "No one is here Lord. No one accuses me."

And that's when Jesus said:

... *"Neither do I accuse you or condemn you;..."*

Now that's grace. And then He said:

... *"...go and sin no more."*

That's truth. Do you see that? He gave her grace and forgiveness but He also gave her the straight truth. Don't live like this. Go sin no more. He rules, He reigns with grace and truth.

Zacchaeus that wee little man discovered that, that grace and truth. He was out on a limb without Him. He was a...a traitor to his own people, Israel, collecting taxes and lining his own pockets and getting rich on the injustice of the tax system of his day. He was hated and despised, probably didn't

have a friend in all of Jericho. So he's up on a tree limb and when Jesus passes by he sees him, looks him right in the eye and says, Zacchaeus, heh, Zacchaeus hadn't heard his name called like that in a long time. It was actually a welcoming call, everyone else called his name with cursings and despiting and terrible language I'm sure. He said: [Luke 19:5]

... *"Zacchaeus, come down, for I want to come to your house today."*

And ~~Jesus came down, or rather~~ Zacchaeus came down and Jesus went to his house. But when Jesus left the house of that man Zacchaeus, his house, his heart would never be the same. He was a changed man because he met Christ and Christ ruled now in his heart and so he gave back with interest what he owed the people, what he had stolen and taken from others. You see, Jesus said, let Me come to your house, that's grace. He offered him forgiveness and a new start in life, that's grace. And then He changed his life and he repaid what he had taken, that's truth, that's righteousness, that's judgment.

He rules with truth and grace.

Let the whole world hear of the wonders of His love. The world needs to hear this message. The nearly 6 billion people on this planet need to know the wonders of His love, because one day He's coming to rule the earth with grace and truth and every kindred and every tongue and every nation which has received Him will worship Him forever and ever. Christ will rule and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. The first time He came in humility, but when He comes again it will be in great honor. The first time He came to a manger, the next time it is in great majesty that He returns and so we sing the song of the Savior and we share it with the world. We want the whole world to know the joy of Jesus. There are 2 options you see, joy or judgment; joy to those who have received the King and judgment to those who have rejected Him. I wanna invite you to receive the King into your life today, who will not only put faith in your heart but joy in your heart as well.