

LYRICS OF CHRISTMAS 12.13.2015

[set up]

Are you the type of person who:

- a) wants to sing Christmas carols all year round,
- b) wants to start singing carols only after Thanksgiving,
- c) wants to wait until the week before Christmas to sing the carols, or
- d) wants to eliminate all carols?

Why?

Why do you think it's so easy for some of us to mindlessly sing the carols? What's the antidote to this dilemma?

[digging deeper]

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) wrote "Joy to the World." According to Watts, the carol was his musical paraphrase and application of Psalm 98. Watts was called the Father of English hymnody. He also wrote "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," "O God Our Help in Ages Past," and "Alas! And Did My Saviour Bleed." In Watts' day, churches sang from the Bible out of the book of Psalms... word for word without much passion. Watts complained about hymn singing in church: "To see the dull indifference, the negligent and thoughtless air that sits upon the faces of a whole assembly, while the psalm is upon their lips, might even tempt a charitable observer to suspect the fervency of their inward religion." Watts decided to contemporize the Psalms lyrically and musically and to reinterpret them in light of the New Testament truths about Jesus. He was criticized by traditional legalists for his efforts, but felt the need to make the singing in church more relevant and passionate.

Check out these links for a little more of his background:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/poets/watts.html?start=1>

<http://www.reformedreader.org/watts.htm>

For this LifeGroup study, it would be helpful for you to have copies for everyone in your LifeGroup with the carol "Joy to the World" on one side of the page and Psalm 98 on the other. As a LifeGroup, read through both. Then give you group 5 minutes to match phrases in the song with the lyrics of Watts' carol. (Play a version of the carol a version of the carol while your LifeGroup member match the lyrics and the verses: <http://youtu.be/bqjzpWYFJfc>).

Read Joy to the World, 1st Stanza: How might you be able to prepare your heart - to make room in your heart - to receive King Jesus? How will this result in more joy for you and for those around you?

Joy to the World

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

Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns;
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills,
and plains
Repeat the sounding joy.

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.

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

Read Joy to the World, 2nd Stanza; Read Psalm 98:4. Singing to the Savior and rejoicing in the Lord are connected. How so? If you had to choose, which would you choose: 1) Singing produces the joy or 2) Joy produces the singing? Why do so many believers NOT choose to sing at church? What might happen if these songless believers would commit obey the Lord and to sing heartily as an act of the will?

Read Joy to the World, 3rd Stanza; Read Genesis 3:17-18 and Revelation 22:3. How has the coming of Christ reversed the curse? How does this carol point us not only to the First Coming of Christ but also the Second Coming of Christ? What might you say to people who despair over the state of the world given things like the recent news about tragedy from Paris and California?

Read Joy to the World, 4th Stanza; Read Psalm 98:3, 9. Where do you see truth, grace, righteousness, and love in the world today? Where do you not see these characteristics in the world? When will stanza 4 and Psalm 98:3, 9 be fulfilled?

Jesus is joyous. See Hebrews 1:9. Therefore, what are the implications for those who are to follow Him, imitate Him, and be conformed to His image?

[living it out]

With the following statement, rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 (10 being highest). The level of joy I experience in my life attracts my family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors to Jesus. What rating do you give yourself? Why?

Read John 15:5, 11 and Galatians 5:22.

Abiding in Jesus = Bearing fruit = love, JOY, peace...

What 2-3 practices/disciplines/experiences/relationships could you add to your life to watch Jesus increase your level of joy? (Note: If Jesus brings joy to the world, then that must mean that He brings joy to you... and me!)

If Jesus brought joy to the world, what is our responsibility? What does this tell us about Missional Living? Where will you and your LifeGroup serve on mission this year in order to bring joy to the world?

What can/will you do to celebrate that there is "Joy to the World" (and, therefore, joy to you!) during this season especially? What tangible action can you take during this Advent season to bring the message of "Joy" to your home, work place, or relationships?

Here's a daily advent reading guide that can help you focus over the next week on the coming of Emmanuel as well:

<http://document.desiringgod.org/the-dawning-of-indestructible-joy-en.pdf?1446648252>

Psalm 98

¹ Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done marvelous things! His right hand and His holy arm have worked salvation for Him.

² The LORD has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.

³ He has remembered His steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

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.

Close in prayer thanking God that His joy is available to us, asking for help to be reminded in your trials that His joy is available, and for Him to use you to help others know His joy as well. If time allows, you can sing this song to close your time together.