

Joy to the World



It is a very busy time of year for everyone. Finding, ordering, buying, and wrapping gifts; monitoring sales; checking web sites; hanging decorations; making travel plans – all these things have a way of causing us to forget what is really important in our life and in the life of our families. God has a personal interest in you and your family. His love for you is unconditional and unchanging. This is not a mere emotion but a settled, constant desire for your eternal well-being. He sacrificed His Son, and the Lord Jesus gave His life to redeem you. He not only wishes your present happiness but has opened His home (Heaven) and wants you to be with Him when life here is over. We are convinced that having Christ as your Savior and being certain of a home in Heaven are the most important issues in the life of any human being.

*“For God so loved the world,
that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but
have everlasting life”
(John 3:16)*

The Lord is Come

*“Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of
GREAT JOY, which shall be to all people.
For unto you is born this day in the city of David
a Savior, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10, 11).*

“Joy to the World” was written by Isaac Watts, appearing in his 1719 hymnal, *Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament and applied to the Christian State and Worship*. It is his rendition of Psalm 98. The first part is titled, “Praise for the Gospel.” His paraphrase of the last part is titled “The Messiah’s Coming and Kingdom.” This is the song we know today as “Joy to the World.”

The music for this beloved carol is thought to have been adapted by Lowell Mason, an American church musician and educator, probably from parts of Handel’s *Messiah*. This adapted tune became known as the “Antioch” tune. Thus an English literary genius of the 18th century, a German-born musical giant from the same period, and a 19th century American choir director combined to give us one of the most stirring and beloved Christmas Carols.

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

Joy to the world! the Savior reigns; let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, 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, far as the curse is found,
Far as, 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, and wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

As of the late 20th century, “Joy to the World” was the most-published Christmas hymn in North America.

“Joy” is one of Christianity’s foremost words; that is because it is one of Christ’s favorite words. In Luke 15, He spoke about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. He was referring to our condition as spiritually lost and our need of being “found” or “saved.” In the parable, when the lost items were recovered, there was great joy. The Shepherd said, “Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.” The Savior added, “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents ... there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.”

Christ was describing His own deep joy, and that of His Father, in rescuing a person from sin’s deadly power. The whole chapter reveals the boundless joy that the blessed Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – experiences each time a soul is saved.

Many people seem to be endlessly chasing after “happiness”; endlessly chasing and never attaining any lasting satisfaction. Actually, the word “happiness” comes from a root word meaning “luck.” It is based on events, circumstances, or “happenings” in life. However, we all realize that circumstances can quickly change. King Solomon was wealthy, influential, and wise, but he knew that one day he would die, leaving everything behind. His view of life, and his sense of futility, caused him to mourn, “Vanity of vanities!” or “It’s all empty!”

The God of Heaven has something infinitely greater for you than mere happiness – He has joy! His message to Earth – the Gospel – is called “the Gospel of the blessed (or joyous) God.” The Apostle Peter, in his first letter, described the joy believers have as “unspeakable joy.” Throughout eternity, saved people will experience what the prophet Isaiah called “everlasting joy.” God wishes you to experience the true joy that can come only to those who know Him. That joy is based on a changeless relationship with the God of all joy, a salvation secured by the Good Shepherd, and an assured future in His presence for ever. It is because the Savior came, died on the cross, and rose from the dead, that the Gospel can offer you forgiveness and “the joy of salvation.”