

WEEK 4: JOY – THE JOY OF JESUS

“Joy to the World” was not written as a Christmas carol. In fact, the original poem hardly had Christmas in mind, and it was not even written to be a song. Rather, Isaac Watts, one of the greatest hymn writers in church history, published a 1719 book of poems in which each poem was based on a Psalm adjusted to reference more explicitly the work of Jesus as revealed in the New Testament. Among the poems was Psalm 98. (The poem was later set to music by Lowell Mason in 1848.) Watts interpreted this Psalm as a celebration of Jesus’s role as King of both His church and the whole world. Over one century later, particular lines of the poem were modified and set to a common tune to produce one of the most famous Christmas carols of all time and the most published Christmas hymn in the history of North America.

Joy to the World

poem by Isaac Watts (1719)

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive its king;
Let ev’ry 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.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let all 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.

ADVENT READING PLAN 2021

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.

Sunday, December 19

Luke 1:46-56

THE JOY OF JESUS: MARY'S SONG

Diane Beers

Ahh...the nostalgia of songs can stir an array of emotions within us. For instance, you may have had a favorite fight song in high school or college and even now you can feel the corners of your mouth turn up into a smile as you reminisce. There are other songs that may bring a tear to your eye in memory of someone you love, or a song may bring back a painful experience that you once endured.

Christmas songs are definitely a favorite of mine. They lift my spirits and are so fun to listen to while decorating the tree, driving in the car, working at church, or entering stores. Christmas songs and carolers bring a smile to my face.

Then there's a caliber of a song that usurps others, Mary's Song, "The Magnificat" a song of pure joy! Mary begins by glorifying and rejoicing in God her Savior, (Luke 1:47) she knows she will be called blessed, the Mighty One has done great things for her, He extends mercy to those who fear Him, He lifts up the humble. She continues singing of God's sovereignty and strength, and how He has kept His promises. While Jesus isn't born yet, she is thanking God in advance. I envision Mary with a smile on her face, busily shaking out rugs, fetching water, preparing meals, humming along as she bustles around completing her tasks for the day. Mary is visiting her cousin and perhaps Elizabeth asks sheepishly, "what are you humming?" Mary replies, "Oh, just a song I made up to show love, honor, and respect to my Lord."

This Christmas season, take time to hum a tune, or sing a song remembering who you belong to, praising Him in advance with thanksgiving and let your spirit be filled with joy for Emmanuel.

Monday, December 20

Luke 1:67-80

THE JOY OF JESUS: ZECHARIAH'S SONG

Gerald Aloran

Zechariah was John the Baptist's father. Before Zechariah prophesied in the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:68-79), the hill country of Judea was in astonishment at the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:65). They asked, "*What is this child going to be?*" (Luke 1:66) There was something special about John the Baptist that the neighborhood could sense based just on how this newborn infant was to be named (Luke 1:57-63).

Zechariah's prophesy proclaimed that part of the salvation promise God made to David and Abraham was finally fulfilled. It also makes clear that John is a prophet of the Most High preparing a way for the Lord.

This was a big deal! The herald preparing the way for the King is now born. It was only a matter of time before the King will make His appearance. But this herald was to grow in the Holy Spirit as a prophet of God, proclaiming a message to Israel which enable many to return to God.

Jesus will be back again. We as followers of Jesus are now His witnesses. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we have a message to declare that is unlike any message the world has to offer. There is a way back to God and it is only through King Jesus. Will you follow Him? Have you shared this good news with others? As we prepare for Christmas, are you willing and committed to proclaim a spirit-empowered message to the world which will enable many to return to God?

Tuesday, December 21

Luke 2:22-35

THE JOY OF JESUS: SIMEON'S JOY

Diane Beers

What are the momentous events in your life that you recall? Did you experience pure joy to witness and literally be a part of a special occasion? Perhaps it was a child's birth, a baptism, a historic event, a milestone birthday, a wedding, or the day you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Regardless of the occasion, what would you have said or done if you were able to witness arrival of the Messiah? I envision myself squealing with delight!

Simeon is a favorite Biblical character of mine and one worthy of admiration and respect. He was righteous and devout, and the Holy Spirit was on him (Luke 2:25). Simeon was older but would not die before he had witnessed the Messiah. Simeon got to hold Jesus in his arms! He said Jesus was a gift from God, and he recognized that Jesus, as the Messiah, would be the "light of the world!" Simeon also prophesied that Jesus would have a paradoxical effect on Israel. Some would fall because of Him, and others would rise. There was no neutral ground. People would joyfully accept Him, or tragically reject Him. Finally, the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed, and a sword would pierce Mary's own soul too. These would not be easy things to understand or accept.

Our own hearts may ache from the painful experiences of regret. However, one can also experience the pure joy that comes from knowing our loving Father accepts us exactly where we are in life. This season, let us focus our attention (like Simeon) on the great gift of God's love for us. And, if you haven't yet accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, do so and share your pure joy with others.

Wednesday, December 22

Luke 2:36-40

THE JOY OF JESUS: ANNA'S JOY

Dan Huffman

I was an impatient kid. My mom would often tell me, "Good things come to those who wait." I grew up thinking that must be in the Bible. Nope. Turns out it is just an old English proverb. As an adult I am still impatient. I like Abraham Lincoln's quote much better. He once said, "Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left behind by those who hustle."

Christmas is just days away, so I am sure there is a lot of hustle going on in your life. In today's reading, we learn of a remarkable woman named Anna. Her husband tragically died just seven years into their marriage. She spent the rest of her life as a widow in the temple. Then, at age 84, she got to meet Baby Jesus. Good things come to those who wait – right?

Nope. I don't believe this popular saying works for Anna. Scripture tells us, "She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying." She is also called a prophet, which is a spokesperson for God. Anna was not sitting around waiting in the temple for decades – she was joyfully serving God!

What joy is there in sitting around waiting? Anna's life was full of service and devotion to the God she loved. This gave Anna an overflowing joy and purpose. When she met Jesus, she could not contain her joy. She spoke to everyone around about God's goodness.

I pray that Anna's life will inspire you today. May we all follow her example by joyfully serving God, then speaking to everyone around about God's goodness. Maybe even invite a few of them to church!

Thursday, December 23

Matthew 2:1-12

THE JOY OF JESUS: THE MAGI'S JOY

Wally Marshall

The Magi (wisemen & astrologers) were looking to the stars for meaning. They believed the stars were signs from God leading them to Jesus and they traveled to Bethlehem to worship the promised King of the Jews.

As they entered the place where Jesus was born and laid, the Magi were transformed and responded to Jesus in love. They fell down at His feet and worshiped Him. They offered Him symbolic gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh as tangible expressions of their love for Jesus. Gold was offered to Him as the King. Incense was used in the Temple, as He was the high priest. Myrrh was an oil used for burial, symbolic of His death. Each gift forecasted what was to come through this child.

When we encounter the presence of Jesus and joy fills our lives, we have the opportunity to offer Him acts of worship like the Magi did. Let everything you do today, December 23, be an expression of love towards Jesus, your King.

Friday, December 24

Luke 2:8-20

THE JOY OF JESUS: THE SHEPHERD'S JOY

Pete Sutton

These outsiders made their home in the shadows of Herod's near-Bethlehem palace, literally. From there they tended sheep and supplied the Jerusalem Temple, just 5 miles north, with goats and lambs for sacrifice. All around them, the region was bustling with official business and travelers complying with Caesar's census, but these shepherds were unphased and uninterested. They knew their place and were content to remain in the shadows – until their night was pierced with a shadow-chasing blaze and a terrifying, gut-rattling proclamation. Under the nose of Herod, behind the backs of the privileged, beyond the reach of Caesar's census, the most official business of the day was going down and only these humble shepherds were extended a front row seat. Today... not yesterday, or the day before... today, in the town of David, the city of sheep and shepherds, the Savior Messiah is born, and you have the all-access, exclusive pass.

After catching their breath and picking themselves off the ground, they hurried to find Mary, Joseph and the baby – to take their place in nativity sets and stories for all future time. But the story doesn't end with the nativity. These shepherds don't go back in the box after Christmas has passed. Like hyped up sports fans bounding out of the stadium after watching their team pull off a crazy upset to win the first championship in a millennium, these shepherds burst out of Bethlehem telling everyone of the miracle they just witnessed. They couldn't contain themselves and it didn't quite matter if Herod or Caesar himself heard them herald this new-born King. This is not the kind of joy one can contain.

How about you? Do the wonder and miracle of Christmas still spark joy in you? Do you find it difficult to contain your joy or has the exclusive encounter somehow lost its luster? Are you still awestruck that you've been invited to encounter this Jesus and chosen to share it with others? If this Christmas your joy seems to wane, perhaps it is time to return to the manger and reflect on the great gift of Jesus? Today, take time to sit still and ponder in your heart the amazing thing God has done, that God might multiply your joy and extend your witness and His glory.

Saturday, December 25

Hebrews 1:1-9

THE JOY OF JESUS: HEAVEN'S JOY

Ryan Worsley

Joy to the world! The Lord is come! Merry Christmas! After a season of waiting and anticipation, we celebrate the birth of Christ with the entire world. And we can do so joyfully, no matter what circumstances we might face. Unlike the emotion of happiness, joy is dependent on the truths of Jesus rather than what is happening around us. If today brings feelings of sadness because of a loss you've experienced, may the joy of Christmas fill your heart. If you find yourself lonely and disheartened, may you still find joy in the promises of Jesus. We know the Lord will one day Himself wipe away every tear and take away every heartache. Until then, may we take comfort in the joy of our salvation.

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
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ADVENT READING PLAN 2021

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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

Thank you for joining us on this journey through Advent. We pray the Christmas season has been joyous and life-giving for you. Now, as we turn our sights to the coming new year, we want to highlight our four Priorities here at The Compass Church. We encourage people to focus on the following: Pursue Him Daily; Connect in Groups; Serve in Teams; and Reach Your Neighbor. Starting in January, we will spend several weeks on the second Priority, Connect in Groups. Jeff Griffin, our Senior Pastor, will begin a new series on the importance of group life, and we will offer several unique ways to connect if you haven't already taken this step in your faith journey. Please be in prayer now that the Lord will help all of us take steps of faith in 2022 that will bring us closer to Him!

With anticipation of His fullness,

Ryan Worsley
Naperville Campus Pastor