

Psalm 98

- ¹ 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 his salvation known
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.*
- ³ He has remembered his love
and his faithfulness to the house of Israel;
all the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.*
- ⁴ Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth,
burst into jubilant song with music;*
- ⁵ make music to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and the sound of singing,*
- ⁶ with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn—
shout for joy before the LORD, the King.*
- ⁷ Let the sea resound, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it.*
- ⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands,
let the mountains sing together for joy;*
- ⁹ let them sing before the LORD,
for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples with equity. (NIV84)*

JOY TO THE WORLD

Have you ever been so excited about something that you screamed? Maybe it was your first kiss. Maybe as you opened the acceptance letter to the college you were dreaming of attending. Maybe your sports team won the big game. Maybe you won the 50/50 raffle at the hockey game.

Ever been so excited that you started to sing? Sometimes it's made up words to a melody that doesn't exist, you just can't help but let the joy that's on the inside out.

That's what was happening with the author of our text today. The Psalmist was so excited that he wanted to sing and he wanted others to sing with him.

It's my prayer today that his feelings are in your hearts this Christmas. And we've been doing it already – singing for joy!! So today as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, may God fill us with the same feelings of hope and joy.

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God's people had witnessed some marvelous things – that's for sure. Jacob saw how God could protect his people from harm, Joseph saw even a horrible situation turned to blessing as he rose to power in Egypt. God's people saw Moses deliver them from those same Egyptians through the 10 Plagues and again by parting the Red Sea. Joshua led them from town to town and they won uncontested battles like have never been seen before in the history of warfare. They saw the sun stand still so that God could continue to provide a victory. They saw God display his power to work deliverance for his people.

***his right hand and his holy arm
have worked salvation for him.***

But you might ask why? Why did God go to great lengths to deliver his people, a people that were so quick to forget and so quick to turn to other gods instead of him. A people that would joyfully receive deliverance from Egypt and then days later turn to grumbling against the Lord. Why would God send 13 Judges to deliver them from the same old pattern - 13 times forgetting about God and becoming just like the pagan nations around them. Why would God be so kind to a people who deserved none of it?

Why would God be so kind as to continue to bless us? We are no different. We will leave this place of worship and in no time be back to our old selves – speaking unkind words and lashing out in anger. It won't be long before Christmas joy wears off and we begin to get mad at God for the hardships that he allows into our lives. We are going to fall back into the pattern, becoming spiritually lazy allowing the temptations of the society around us to impede on the lives that we know we should live.

So why would God continue to bless us? We don't deserve it. We deserve punishment and pain, death and hell for our failing to trust in him. Why would God be so kind as to bless us? The psalmist covers that one, too. ***He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel***

That's why God kept the house of Israel alive – because he promised he would. He promised he would keep the remnant and that the Savior of the world would be born to them.

And it's faithfulness to his promises that keeps God loving us. He was grafted us to the house of Israel as well. Through faith we are the new Israel. The promises of faith and forgiveness that he gave to them we inherit too, through our adoption in the family of God. The Psalm's words come true in our hearing and in the faith he's given us to believe.

***all the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.***

At Christmas we celebrate promises fulfilled. For thousands of years, God had been promising salvation to his people. Ever since he came down to Adam and Eve in the garden, he had been announcing that his chosen one would come down to save them. Generations had come and gone all waiting, watching, believing, and receiving salvation in what God had promised, until the time had fully come. When God's time was right, he came down – took on flesh and saved us. With a perfect life he erased our lives of sin. With his holy death, he absorbed the punishment that should have been ours.

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With his glorious resurrection, he secured our salvation and completed the plan of salvation. No longer is death our fate, but life, glorious life with Jesus.

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Even mightier than his Old Testament miracles is the defeat of Satan and sin and death. Even more glorious than his amazing appearances of old is the abundance of love that he packs into our hearts and lives. He did a powerful thing when we won us for him. Jesus was the mighty Creator God yet his power was veiled in the flesh of an infant. The mighty power of God was veiled for you too – veiled in a few drops of water and a few words - yet Baptism is the power of God, his right hand showing his power over unbelief and his love that's greater than our sin. In baptism he welcomed you into his family, made you an heir of the promises of heaven, gave you birth in Christ. On your baptism day, God's powerful gospel made the baby in the manger your brother. And the love that God has for him, he has for us too. We get to spend our lives on earth and our eternal lives in heaven with Jesus because of his love.

That's news worth shouting about. That's a message that is worth a song. And even more than that, it's worth a life of devotion to him, it's worth striving to please him with our lives, it's worth longing to worship him, here in his house and in every day and every situation we face. We can let his glorious gospel permeate our lives and influence our words, actions, attitudes. We can see every day an opportunity to sing praises to our God who loved us enough to save us.

God gives us opportunity to sing. If you don't have a song on your heart, spend some more time in his Word, for the Word of God sings from cover to cover with the love of Jesus – the love he had for you. It sings of grace and every blessing, of life and life eternal. God's Word truly is a love song written for you. So sing it, rejoice! And I promise you won't be alone. Nature joins you in praising our God.

***⁷ Let the sea resound, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it.
⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands,
let the mountains sing together for joy;***

This Christmas, it's Joy to the World. Even if life is hard, even if there are major challenges in your future or your present, sing to the Lord. He's always near and recalling his birth and his love fills our hearts with Joy. God grant that it's not just at Christmas, but all year and throughout our lives that we are inspired to sing

“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 nature sing!” Amen.