

Make A Joyful Noise

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[0 : 00] God, we come from various walks of life, different seasons, but as your people, no matter where we are, we all want to be characterized by joy because of your salvation.

And so we ask, God, that you would grant us joy, exceeding joy that transcends our circumstances. And we pray that you would inspire that kind of joy as we hear from your word, as we speak to us from Psalm 98. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Amen. Psalm 98.

It's a little superscription that says a psalm. I'll read it out loud for us. 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. The Lord has made known his salvation. He has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.

[1 : 21] 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. Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

Break forth into joyous song and sing praises. Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre. With the lyre and the sound of melody. With trumpets and the sound of the horn.

Make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord. Let the sea roar and all that fills it. The world and those who dwell in it. Let the rivers clap their hands. Let the hills sing for joy together.

Before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity. The year was 1719.

There was a man in England who lamented the dullness and the listlessness of the corporate worship of Christians during his time.

[2 : 24] And he said this. He said, And one day he was reading Psalm 98.

And he was gripped by verse 4. Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Break forth into joyous song and sing praises. And he wanted Christian worship to be characterized by that kind of joy.

And so he set out to write fresh songs of worship. New lyrics that would inspire such joyous singing. And he wrote these words. Joy to the world, the Lord is come.

Let earth receive her King. The famous first line of the most published Christmas hymn in North America, Joy to the World. And written by Isaac Watts. And it was inspired by this psalm, Psalm 98. And the psalm teaches us that we should make a joyful noise at the coming of Christ the King. And so it's a very similar psalm to 96, which we covered two weeks ago.

[3 : 38] And it begins with the exact same exhortation, which is, Oh, sing to the Lord a new psalm. And we talked about that a couple weeks ago, that it doesn't mean to sing a brand new song every time we sing it.

Right? It's more that we ought to sing from a fresh, live, kind of present experience of God's grace in our lives. So that our worship is not just this ritualistic thing that you repeat and regurgitate without thinking about it.

It's not stagnant, but it's live. And Ronald Allen, who is a Christian author and a seminary professor, writes in his book about worship, that when a non-singer becomes a Christian, he or she becomes a singer.

Not all are blessed with a finely tuned ear and a well-modulated voice, so the sound may not be superb. It may even be out of tune and off key.

Remember, worship is a state of heart. Musical sound is a state of art. Let's not confuse them. And so not all Christians might compose worship songs, right?

[4 : 38] But as this psalm commences, every Christian should sing to the Lord a new song. A song that stems from their heart, from their fresh experience of the grace of God, the saving grace of God in their lives.

And the reason is given, verses 1 to 3, why we should sing this new song. Four, he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made known his salvation.

He has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. 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. The language that's used here, right, of God's right hand and arm working salvation are anthropomorphisms, describing God metaphorically in human terms, because obviously God does not have physical, literal hands and arms, because God is spirit, as John 4, 24 says.

But metaphorically speaking, I mean, he has the right hand, his arms, right? He's got the biggest biceps in the world, so to speak, right? It's metaphorically speaking.

And these images are used prominently in the Song of Moses in Exodus 15, after the deliverance of Israelites from out of Egypt and through the Red Sea. These expressions are used, his right hand, arm, the strength and power belong to God.

[5 : 57] And in verse 2, the clause the Lord has made known his salvation is parallel to the clause that he has revealed his righteousness. So make known salvation, reveal righteousness.

Those righteousness and salvation are conceptually related. And because God's salvation comes from the establishment of God's righteous reign.

When God reigns and his righteousness is established, that's when salvation comes to his people, right? And so God overthrows the oppressors and he inaugurates his kingdom.

God delivers his people and rules over them with righteousness. And the reason why God has done this is because he has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. And that doesn't mean that he had previously forgotten his steadfast love.

It just means that he has acted on the basis of his steadfast love and faithfulness at this time. He has remembered them and has come through for them. And the steadfast love and faithfulness are two attributes that are most commonly attributed to God throughout Scripture.

[6 : 57] God was revealed in Exodus 34, 5-7 as abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. And steadfast love refers to the loving kindness of God, refers to the unmerited favor that he bestows on his people, the unchanging commitment he has toward his people.

And then the word faithfulness refers to God's stability, his reliability, his firmness of character, that he always acts in a manner that's consistent with who he is, his character. And so he is stable, firm, and unchanging.

He's faithful and true. And by acting in a manner that's consistent with his character, God has worked salvation. And this salvation doesn't merely benefit the house of Israel, which is mentioned here, but also leads to the revelation of God's righteousness in the sight of the nations, it says.

And all the ends of the earth seeing the salvation of our God. And because the whole earth, not just Israel, sees God's salvation, verse 4 commands all the earth to make a joyful noise to the Lord and to break forth into joyous songs and sing praises.

And after he exhorts all the peoples to make a joyful noise to God, the psalmist exhorts all creation to make a joyful noise to God in verses 7-9. Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the world and those who dwell in it.

[8 : 11] Let the rivers clap their hands. Let the hills sing for joy together before the Lord. For he comes to judge the earth, he will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity. It's a really great image, right?

It's like not only the inhabitants of the world, but also the world itself, the environment itself, will make a joyful noise to God in worship. So the sea roars, hills sing, rivers clap their hands.

It's the choir of creation joining the worship of God's congregation. And we often like to think that it's better for us.

We often resist God's rule. There's kind of a widespread kind of suspicion of authority in our generation. People don't like the idea of judgment. People don't like the idea of submitting to someone else's, someone who is in authority.

And so we kind of question verse 9 when it says, God judges the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness, and that this is supposed to lead to joy because we're allergic to the idea of judgment, right?

[9 : 23] But it's kind of like we're being like children, right, who refuse to, I don't know, I can think of so many examples, children who refuse to wear a jacket to go out into freezing weather, right, or children that insist on having ice cream for breakfast and lunch and dinner, right, or children who

just flail their arms and refuse to take the medicine when they're, you know, sick and needed.

It's like they don't know what's best for them, right? And we're kind of like that sometimes, right? We resist God's judgments, resist his rule and think, no, it would be better if I had it my own way. But the judgment of God, because he's righteous and because he's equitable, as it says in verse 9, right, when we submit to it, it brings joy, right?

And we're going to be able to make joyful noise to him. And that's what this hope is about, is that when God's reign is fully established on this earth, that all injustices will be made right, all oppressions will cease, and there will be a joyful celebration of God's rule, right?

But when will that day finally come, as Psalm 98 says? When will God come to judge the earth? And this psalm, like all of Scripture, is fulfilled by Jesus. And the salvation that God's people has experienced throughout the ages culminates in the salvation that comes through Jesus, who dies on the cross for our sins and is resurrected and ascends to the Father's right hand.

And that's why the Gospel of Luke, which we've been studying on Sundays, mentions, associates the word salvation repeatedly with Jesus' birth. And then the divine attributes of God, steadfast love and faithfulness, which when it's rendered in Greek becomes grace and truth, are attributed to Jesus, right?

[11:09] John 1.14 says Jesus is full of grace and truth. So he's the one who demonstrates the steadfast love of God by coming and demonstrating his unmerited favor, by coming to a disobedient, disloyal people to save them.

He's also the one who demonstrates God's faithfulness to his character by displaying God's righteousness in punishing sin, and in Jesus bearing the penalty of our sin. And that's the beginning of God's salvation.

It's not the consummation of it, right? Because the consummation will come when Jesus returns for the second time. In the second coming, this righteousness, this equity, his rule and the fullness of joy will come at his second coming.

But it has already been inaugurated, has been started. It's been initiated in his first coming. And so it's appropriate to sing of it at Christmas time as well. So if we rightly understand that that's what God has done for us in Jesus, that would make us joyful, right?

And so the question I want to ask is, is your life characterized by joy? If not, then let's let this Christmas season serve as a reminder for us that God may restore the joy of salvation in us so that we can make a joyful noise at the coming of Christ the King.

[12:26] And I think it's important.