

Joy to the World!

Scripture Reading — Luke 2:8-20

I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. — Luke 2:10-11

I enjoy the Christmas season. I like the cheerful decorations, spending time with family and friends, and eating Christmas goodies. My favorite part of Christmas, by far, though, is singing carols—and, above all, “Joy to the World!”

“Joy to the world! The Lord is come,” God’s people announce at Christmastime. Based on Psalm 98, Isaac Watts’s eighteenth-century carol celebrates the coming of Jesus, the Christ. The joy of the Savior’s coming resounds throughout all of creation, even the fields and rocks and hills and plains “repeat the sounding joy.” This is good news for *all* of God’s world!

What’s so good about this news announced each Christmas? Why sing this carol with such exuberance? Watts answers that question in the third stanza, where he declares that Jesus has come to deal with the curse of human sin and rebellion. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus brings the blessing as “far as the curse is found.”

In Watts’s hymn, this phrase repeats several times—and for good reason. Released from bondage to sin and the power of death over us, we are now freed to live with joy, to love God and our neighbor, and to cultivate the earth God has given us. So let’s sing with joy that good news: “Joy to the world! The Lord is come”!

Prayer

Jesus, you have come and released us from the -power of sin and death. Help us to live in ways that proclaim the wonders of your love. Amen.

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