

Introduction:

When the people of Israel returned from Babylon and begin to rebuild the walls of the city of Jerusalem, Nehemiah forbade them to mourn because the day was holy unto the Lord. He said: "Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

One of the best loved hymns of the Christian world is "Joy to the world, the Lord Is Come," the great hymn by Isaac Watts, based upon this Psalm: Psalm 98. It will be fitting for us to look at it this morning.

We have a great deal to rejoice in this morning, if we are the children of God, much more than those who returned from exile those many centuries ago. This Psalm gives us the Source, the Substance, and the Fullness of Joy.

- I. The Source of Joy. This is our Triune God, who covenanted in the eternal Godhead before the world was to save sinners out of Adam's sinful race. We should note:
 - A new song is to be sung unto the Lord. Unto Jehovah, because of the marvelous things that He has done.
 - A. He has done them: The Father decreed the salvation and appointed sons of Adam to eternal life before the foundation of the world. Nothing in time is the cause of that appointment, and nothing in time or creation can change it, as Paul tells us in Rom. 8 and Titus 1:1-3.
 - B. His right hand has done them: The Son of God, the Mediator, was set at God's right hand in order to accomplish this redemption. We celebrate the Gospel, which the Son which began in time with His taking our flesh and blood in the body of the Holy Virgin. This was for the purpose of representing us as the Last Adam, fully keeping the law for us, and suffering the penalty of the law of sin and death for us, being made a curse for us in the horrible death of crucifixion, bearing the wrath of God. Then resting in the grave for us until He rose on the Third Day for us, and ascending into Heaven as our Redeemer and Mediator until all enemies are put down, when He will return to judge the living and the dead and glorify us forever with Him in the eternal glory. Amen and Amen.
 - C. His holy arm has done them. The Holy Spirit Who is the immanent power of God in Creation and the church applies all the work of the Lord Jesus to the Church. He is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity and does the powerful work of salvation in each of the elect: calling them to Christ and giving them new life, working faith in them and repentance, working in them as the children of God the beginnings of love and joy and peace that He will perfect at the resurrection of the dead, for He preserves and sanctifies us, and will raise us from the dead to eternal glory at the last day. Amen and Amen.
 - D. These are marvelous works; they could not be accomplished by man or by the work of the flesh, but by God only. It is a glorious victory that only the Triune God could give in its fullness..

II. The Substance of This Joy vs. 2-4

- A. God has made known this salvation. This is the good news for all men. 2,3
- B. The Gospel exhibits the righteousness of God, which is called His salvation.
- C. The Gospel reconciles mercy and truth. God's truth is vindicated and His mercy is not shortened. This is wisdom far beyond the wisdom of men: that God can be just and the justifying of those who believe. Jesus kept the law and fully satisfied for all our sins, so that we can be counted righteous before Him. Then, by the Spirit we are made new to be presented without spot and blemish to the Lord in the last day.
- D. This salvation is to go to the ends of the world. The apostles were sent to preach this Gospel to the whole world, that all who believe would be saved.
- E. This joy is to go to the entire world and be the cause of rejoicing throughout the whole world. It has been done and is continuing to be done until every enemy of the Lord Jesus is made His footstool and every tongue confesses and every knee bows.
- F. The joy is to consist of a loud noise, rejoicing, and songs of praise. This is the new song that was predicted by the Old Testament but comes to fulfillment in the New Testament in the blood of Christ. Jesus said that what He told his apostles in secret was to be shouted from the rooftops. Every believer is to speak and proclaim this truth with all his heart, all his soul, and all his mind. Amen. The "loud noise" is not necessarily decibels but is to be spread through the whole world.

III. This joy is to be full and complete with nothing in creation left out of it. Vs. 5-9

- A. It cannot be fully expressed by men and their feeble voices, but is to augmented by every sort of instrument, including angels, instruments invented by men, the animals, birds, fish, trees, plants and everything that moves on the earth. You don't believe me? Then look at Psalm 148. [READ THIS] Everything is to praise the Lord.
- B. Man is given preeminence in this for he is both of the earth and of the spirit. He was created to join the physical creation to the spiritual one to unite in praising God forever and ever.
- C. The soft and mellow instruments; the brazen call of the trumpet; Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs.
- D. This to be done before the LORD, this new song is not for the flesh or the pride of men, but to the praise and glory of God. Not to build man's empire, but to praise God for His kingdom which endures forever. This is not an Old Testament song, but one that exalts the Name of Jesus: Col 3:16, 17 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.
- E. Even the seas are to roar for God's glory with all the fullness in them: fish and beasts; all the world and everything in it; The floods of water and the hills are to rejoice before the Lord. As Isaac Watts put it: Let heaven and nature sing; let heaven and nature sing; let heaven and heaven and nature sing.

- F. All is to be done before the Lord, because when the work of Christ and the Spirit are done, carrying out the eternal plan of God the earth, the world, and the people will be brought into His order and justice forever and ever. Amen. Vs. 9

Application.

- A. There is nothing that was not created for the glory of God and the advancement of the kingdom of God: All suits His purpose and plan This is fundamental to the Christian faith. The devil has nothing. All the cattle are God's; all the silver, the gold, the land, the seas and the fish. Psalm 8: read it aloud.
- B. In the large expanse of God's creation everything has a song to sing for His glory and his praise.
- C. Remember this in the trials of life. Nothing belongs to the devil; everything belongs to God. Illustrations.
1. Your opportunities to do good to people: this is from God. Take advantage of it and use it
 2. The wrongs people do you. When people do you wrong: These are the most important times in your life, probably, for here your Christian faith will shine most brightly
 - a. These test your faith. Are you a fair weather Christian, whose faith is anchored in the things of the world, and not in the promises of God?
 - b. These are times of great danger to you: to harbor bitterness and wrath, to seek revenge in thought, word, and deed.
 - c. These are times of great opportunity: can you forgive as Christ forgave you, freely and completely. What an opportunity for you. "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ."
 3. The wrongs you have done to others:
 - a. These are times of great temptation, too. To harden your heart; to blame others for your transgressions. "Against thee and against thee only have I sinned."
 - b. But what an opportunity to show the quality of your own faith, to take responsibility and acknowledge the transgression: Psalm 32:6 says that the truly godly man acknowledges his sin before the Lord and confesses it to the Lord. God then becomes his hiding place and protection.
- C. It is important to distinguish the church, however, from the larger creation. Everything sings in creation, but everything doesn't sing in church. We don't need a frog band or an ocean wave chorus in the church. Just as the Lord's Supper is a symbolic meal, so our music is symbolic: it should be majestic, reverent, well done, and done before the Lord and not a performance for the people. The order of worship of the RCUS has some good statements on church music, just as our vision statement does. Everything you do every day must be in faith for the glory of God, but some of what you do should not be done in church.

Well God bless you.