

**Psalm 98****A psalm.**

- <sup>1</sup> 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.
- <sup>2</sup> The LORD has made his salvation known  
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.
- <sup>3</sup> He has remembered his love  
and his faithfulness to Israel;  
all the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation of our God.
- <sup>4</sup> Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth,  
burst into jubilant song with music;
- <sup>5</sup> make music to the LORD with the harp,  
with the harp and the sound of singing,
- <sup>6</sup> with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn—  
shout for joy before the LORD, the King.
- <sup>7</sup> Let the sea resound, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it.
- <sup>8</sup> Let the rivers clap their hands,  
let the mountains sing together for joy;
- <sup>9</sup> 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.

## Luke 2:1-12

### The Birth of Jesus

**2** In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register.

<sup>4</sup> So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

### Sermon: Joy

Please have your Bibles open at **Psalm 98** – then we'll look at Luke chapter 2.

There's an **outline** – if you'd like to take some notes. Let me **pray** first...

## Context

In our build up to Christmas

### **[Slide 1-Context]**

Two weeks ago, we concluded that no matter what's going on in our lives and in this dark and gloomy world – we have the **certain hope of the Messiah** – because God promised to send King Jesus the Son of God – **who saves us for Heaven**

Last week we asked ourselves – **how we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day** – and how we prepare for Jesus coming again at an hour we don't know when?

And we concluded that **we can prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth by sharing the love of Jesus with others** – and we can prepare for Jesus coming again by making sure everyone we come across – knows that Jesus saves us for Heaven.

This week we are looking at the **JOY of Christmas**

So, before we go any further – we'd better define what **JOY** is:

### **[Slide 2 – Joy]**

*A feeling of great happiness* (Oxford Dictionary)

When we look around our world and see the **turmoil, disasters, conflicts, wickedness, cruelty and persecution** that goes on, it's **pretty hard** to feel much **JOY** – isn't it?

When I look at the sufferings and struggles that some of our church family are going through, it's hard to feel much JOY – there either.

Even our sister church In Terrigal is hurting right now, after two recent arson attacks has left them unable to worship in the church; not much JOY there either!

Yet the Apostle Paul says we should (in Philippians 4:4) *rejoice always* and the Apostle James says “*consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know the testing of your faith produces perseverance*” (James. 1:2-3)

Are these guys for real?

**I don't always feel joyous when it's been a tough week [like this week] and I have to stand by and watch my church family suffer both corporately and individually**

But in our Old Testament reading from Psalm 98 the psalmist gives us **some reasons why we can have joy** no matter what is going in our lives and in this world!

Let's take a look

[Please turn to Psalm 98]

## Joy in the Old Testament (Psalm 98)

### [Slide 3-Psalm 98]

Psalm 98 is a **Royal Psalm** praising God as the King of His people

The writer of the psalm – the **psalmist** - calls upon people to sing a new song to the Lord their King - because of - the **marvellous things He has done**.

What marvellous things?

*V2 - The LORD has made his salvation known*

*and revealed his righteousness to the nations.*

*V3 - He has remembered his love*

*and his faithfulness to Israel;*

It begs the question – when in the Old Testament did God make His salvation known – and - when did God remember His love and faithfulness to Israel?

**Two huge events** in Israel's history come to mind

The first was when **God chose Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery and captivity in Egypt** and take them to the **Promised Land**.

This was a **huge salvation operation** – a mass **exodus**

And during the time of that exodus – God did indeed do marvellous things – ***with His right hand and holy arm*** – He sent **10 plagues** to “persuade” the Pharaoh of Egypt to **let the Israelites go**.

So, the psalmist is saying the **people CAN sing a new song** because of the **victory their God – the King - has given!**

The second huge salvation event was **when the Israelites were in Exile in Babylon** – and held captive by the Babylonians.

Again, **God's right hand and holy arm** – enabled the Israelites to come out of Exile – there were no plagues this time – no battles – no armies involved

**God in His sovereign grace** simply arranged for Persia to take over the Babylonian empire – and arranged for a Persian King – **Cyrus** – to **give a decree** to let the **Israelites return to their homeland** (Ezra 1:1-3)

**Two amazing salvation events** – the **Exodus** and the **return from Exile**

The Psalmist – sees these events as **worth singing a new song of victory**

Because as he says in v3 - *all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.*

And because God is righteous and fair – look at v9 - *for God comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.*

The Psalmist says this **should cause people to shout for JOY** (v4) and **burst into jubilant song** (v4) – **play music on harps and trumpets** and **blow the ram's horns** (a symbol of God's authority and power!)

God has done such marvellous things – that the Psalmist says it's even like creation itself - **is rejoicing** – not just the people

So, in vv7-8 – *the sea and its creatures are rejoicing* – *the world and all its occupants are rejoicing* – even *the rivers clap their hands* – and *mountains sing together*

That's the JOY of the Old Testament – but the Psalm also leaves with a hint for the future - in v9

The Lord is coming to judge – and *He's coming with righteousness and equity*  
All people who are oppressed, struggling and weighed down with problems will  
be able to rejoice once again – because as the end of v6 says – **people are singing**  
**to the Lord, the King of Heaven and Earth!**

You see Psalm 98 – anticipates the coming of a King (v6)– that King is King Jesus –  
who came on that very first Christmas Day – And Psalm 98 also anticipates King  
Jesus coming again one day to judge in righteousness

That's what's so great about the Old Testament – it has something to say to the  
people of Israel at the time – but - **it always points ahead to the New Testament**  
**and to Jesus!**

Let's look then at that first Christmas Day – and **the birth of King Jesus**

*[Please turn to our NT passage from Luke 2:1-12]*

What **JOY** can we find there?

**[Slide 4-Joy NT Heading]**

**The Joy of the New Testament (Luke 2:1-12)**

**[Slide 4a-promises]**

1<sup>st</sup> – there's the JOY of knowing that ***God remembers and keeps His promises***

- God promised the Messiah King would **come from the family line of David** (2 Samuel 7)– and **Joseph is a descendant of David** (see v4)
- God also promised the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) – and **Jesus was born in Bethlehem**. (see vv6-7)

### [Slide 4b-Jesus for everyone]

2<sup>nd</sup> – there's the JOY of knowing that *Jesus came for everyone – not just the rich and the popular*

- Jesus' birth in humble surroundings – is a **hint of his humility as a servant king – who will humble himself and lay down his life for us**
- Jesus' first sleep in a manger – an animal feeding trough – hints that He will feeds us – as the Bread of Life (John 6:35)– in fact even the name Bethlehem – means *house of bread* – so this one born - in the house of bread - will give us our daily bread and spiritual food
- Jesus' first visitors and witnesses are humble shepherds – often seen as outcasts, stinky and not to be trusted – but God arranged for them to hear this good news first – showing – Jesus' birth is Good News for all – even the marginalized and the unfortunate, even those disliked and disapproved of – no one will be excluded - if they come to Jesus

3<sup>rd</sup> – there's the JOY of knowing that *Jesus is a Saviour*

- Jesus came to seek those lost from God – and to save them for Heaven.



- This child will grow up **to die on a cruel cross and take the punishment of sins away from us and give us forgiveness – and 3 days after His death – will rise again – to show that death is not a problem for us – if we believe in Him.**
- You see – without Jesus – we are like the ancient Israelites – in captivity and slavery to sin – and in spiritual exile
- Jesus calls ALL who are lost from God – to repent – come out of spiritual exile - and turn back to God – and believe in Jesus the Saviour

So, we CAN have JOY – despite what’s going on in our lives and in this world

We CAN rejoice knowing – we have a Saviour – who saves us for Heaven

We CAN rejoice knowing – that even when someone dies sooner than we expected – and they believe in Jesus’ death and resurrection – their soul is with the Lord in Heaven straight away – and one day – they will get a new resurrected body - when Jesus returns.

We CAN have JOY in knowing that - our brother Adam – is experiencing that JOY of being with the Lord right now. And one day he will get a new body that’s not broken and full of cancer! Praise God!

## Challenge

In our Bible Study this week - **we were asked what gives us JOY?**

We had various answers

Things like...

- *Meaningful relationships – with family, friends and spouses*
- *Personal and professional achievements*
- *Family gatherings*
- *Acts of kindness*
- *Creative activities, like: art, music, writing, movies and cooking*
- *Following our favourite sports-team*
- *National events and successes*
- *Giving Christmas gifts*
- *Being alive!*
- *Church family gatherings/worship/hymns/songs*
- *Joy - when God's Word speaks to us personally*
- *Joy - when someone chooses to follow Jesus!*
- *Joy in having a personal relationship with the Lord*
- *Joy in knowing that Jesus has defeated sin and death!*

Personally – **I get great JOY when someone who was lost from God - starts following JESUS!**

**[Slide 5-Challenge]**

But I'd like to challenge us – this morning - **to think about those we know who are LOST from God.**

My challenge for this Christmastime – **is to tell those who are LOST – about King Jesus the Saviour** – that He is the way to be found - and - that He saves people for Heaven. **Ask those who are lost - to consider repenting – and to follow Jesus.**

in Luke 15:10 - Jesus says – ***“I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”***

Jesus is saying that the angels in Heaven - rejoice - **when people hand their lives to Jesus**

We can share in the angels' JOY – if we take up the challenge - **to tell people who are LOST from God - about Jesus!**

But remember there's an URGENCY - **to tell those who are LOST about Jesus the Saviour** - because - Psalm 98 says - **the King – King Jesus – is coming again one day to judge with righteousness and equity (fairness) and we don't know when.**

**We don't want ANYONE to be lost from God forever, do we?**

**[Slide 6-2 Peter 3:9]**

Neither does God – here's how the Apostle Peter puts it in 2 Peter 3:9

***The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness.***

***Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.***

WE - are **God's instruments** in enabling people who are lost to come to repentance.

And as we do that, WE WILL experience exceedingly great JOY!

Let's pray...

*Father God, thank you we can sing a NEW SONG of joy*

*Knowing that God remembers and keeps His promises!*

*Knowing that Jesus came for everyone!*

*And knowing that Jesus is the Saviour King – who saves people for Heaven!*

*Help us share that joy with those lost with God – this Christmas and beyond*

*In Jesus name, we pray. Amen!*