

JOY TO THE WORLD

Psalm 98

Psalm 96

Psalm 72

Awareness

Before listening, reflect:

- When you think about preparing your heart for Christmas or observing Advent, do you think about the Psalms? Are there any Psalms that remind you of Christmas or make you think of Christ's birth when you read them? Why or why not?
- Is it ok to think and talk about God's judgment at Christmastime, why or why not?

The book of Psalms may not tell the Christmas story, but there's no doubt it points us to the event we celebrate at Christmas: the coming of our Savior. The psalmists repeatedly anticipate and sing about the coming of a Savior, one who will bring justice, right what is wrong, and fix what is broken. Let's prepare our hearts for Christmas by studying the perspective of the Psalms and remind ourselves what the birth of Christ means for us and the world as we join the psalmists in anticipating the advent of our Savior and King.

Listen: [*Joy to the World*](#)

Reflection

After listening, consider:

- In North American society, judgment has a very negative connotation. We don't like to be (or feel) judged by others. But the Psalms present God's judgment as good news and the psalmists anticipate it eagerly. Why is God's judgment different than human judgment?
- How does it make you feel to think about God's judgment during the Advent and Christmas season?
- Advent is a season of waiting, longing, and hope. How does observing Advent help us in our desire for justice in our world today?
- Study one or two of your favorite Christmas hymns or carols. Do they tell the whole story, the story of Christ's birth and what brings about? What do we miss when we only sing one or two verses?
- How often do you talk about *why* Jesus came and will come again? When you discuss the nativity story, do you also talk about all that Jesus Christ's reign brings with it?
- What new song might you sing this Christmas season? What are your "fresh praises"?

Related Passages

- **Exodus 15:1-21**

- Psalm 68
- Psalm 97
- Psalm 98
- Psalm 102
- Psalm 148
- Luke 1:46-55
- Revelation 19:1-8

Conclusion

Consider this reflection on singing the Psalms from the book *Sing a New Song: Recovering Psalm Singing for the Twenty-First Century*:

“In Biblical Hebrew, a new song is not necessarily a song that was recently written. The phrase is an idiom for a certain kind of praise song—the kind of praise one sings loudly for all the nations to hear after God has granted a great victory...Such a song is sung when the old notes of lament have given way to a new melody of joy and gladness. It bursts forth from the heart because of some momentous deliverance that puts all the old griefs into the distant past” (p ix).

What new things is God doing in your life? What victories do you attribute to God and want to shout from the mountain tops in praise? Write your song of praise; express the joy you have because Jesus has already come and tell of the work he has done and is doing in your life.

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/joy-to-the-world>

Printed on April 19, 2024