

Christmas Playlist – Week 3

Joy to the World

Part 1: The Source of True Joy

Where does real joy actually come from?

Not seasonal joy.

Not momentary excitement.

Not manufactured positivity.

But the kind of joy Scripture talks about.

The kind of joy that survives grief.

The kind of joy that doesn't evaporate when life hurts.

Because if we're honest, Christmas is a strange season. It's supposed to be joyful, but for many people, it's also heavy. It magnifies what's missing. It reminds us of who isn't at the table anymore. It exposes wounds we've learned to ignore the rest of the year.

Some of you walked in today carrying grief.

Some of you walked in tired.

Some of you walked in pretending you're okay when you're not.

So let me say this clearly before we go any further:

Biblical joy is not denial.

It is not pretending pain doesn't exist.

And it is not dependent on how your life is going right now.

And the Bible doesn't leave us guessing about that.

So if you have your Bible, turn with me to **Psalm 98**.

PSALM 98:1-6 MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE

Psalm 98 opens like this:

A Psalm.

98 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.

²The Lord has made known his salvation;

he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.

³He 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.

⁴Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;

break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

⁵Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,

with the lyre and the sound of melody!

⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn

make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord!

This is not a suggestion.

This is a command.

“Sing.”

“Make a joyful noise.”

“Break forth.”

And notice what joy is rooted in here — not feelings, not circumstances, not outcomes — but **salvation**.

Verse 2 says:

“The Lord has made known his salvation;

he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.”

And verse 3 says:

“He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness...”

Joy, in Scripture, is always tethered to **what God has done**, not to what we feel.

That’s important, because many of us have been taught—explicitly or implicitly—that joy is something we’re supposed to *work up*. Something we’re supposed to *generate*. Something we’re supposed to *maintain* if we’re “good Christians.”

But Psalm 98 doesn’t say, “*Feel joyful*.”

It says, “*Remember*.”

Joy begins with remembering.

JOY AND MEMORY

Scripture places enormous weight on memory.

God remembers His covenant.

God remembers His promises.

God remembers His people.

The problem is never that God forgets.

The problem is that **we do**.

And nowhere is that clearer than in the story of Israel after the Exodus.

God parts the Red Sea.

He rescues them from slavery.

He delivers them with miracles so overwhelming that future generations would talk about them for centuries.

And yet, not long after, listen to what happens in

Numbers 11:1-5

11 And the people complained in the hearing of the Lord about their misfortunes, and when the Lord heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp. ² Then the people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the Lord, and the fire died down. ³ So the name of that place was called Taberah,^[a] because the fire of the Lord burned among them.

⁴ Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, “Oh that we had meat to eat! ⁵ We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.

“The people complained in the hearing of the Lord...”

They cry out, saying:

“We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing...”

And later, in **Numbers 21**, they say:

Numbers 21:5

⁵ And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.”

“Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?”

They remembered slavery with nostalgia and freedom with resentment.

They selectively edited their past.

And if we’re honest, we do the same thing.

How quickly do we forget answered prayers?

How quickly do we reinterpret painful seasons?

How quickly do we allow present discomfort to erase past faithfulness?

We remember what supports our frustration and forget what fuels our faith.

Joy erodes when memory erodes.

That’s why Psalm 98 anchors joy in remembrance:

“He has remembered His steadfast love.”

Even when we forget, God does not.

And that should produce joy — not because life is easy, but because **salvation is secure**.

JOY ROOTED IN PROMISE

Psalm 98 is not only looking backward — it’s looking forward.

Because salvation didn’t begin in Bethlehem.

It didn’t begin with shepherds or angels or a manger.

Salvation began with a promise.

In **Genesis 12**, God speaks to Abram and says:

Genesis 12:1-3

12 Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

“In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

This is critical.

Christmas is not God improvising a solution to human failure.

Christmas is God fulfilling a promise He made long before Israel ever failed.

Joy flows from knowing that history is not random.

That redemption is intentional.

That salvation is not reactive.

The birth of Jesus is not God scrambling — it is God keeping His word.

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JOY

Psalms 98 ties salvation directly to righteousness.

Verse 2 says God has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.

Psalms 98:2

²The Lord has made known his salvation;

he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.

Paul explains this in **Romans 1:17**:

Romans 1:17

¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith...”

This matters because joy cannot survive if it is tied to **our righteousness**.

If joy depends on how well I perform, how consistently I obey, how clean my record is — joy will always be fragile.

But Scripture teaches something radically different:

Joy flows from **God’s righteousness given to us**.

We are not joyful because we are good.

We are joyful because **Christ is righteous, and we are united to Him by faith**.

And that brings us to the center of everything.

THE SOURCE OF JOY — JOHN 15:11

Jesus says in **John 15:11**:

John 15:11

“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”

“These things I have spoken to you, that **my joy may be in you**, and that your joy may be full.”

Please don’t rush past that.

Jesus does not say:

- “Joy like mine”
- “Joy modeled after mine”
- “Joy inspired by mine”

He says **my joy in you**.

That means Christian joy is not imitation — it is **participation**.

It is not something you manufacture.

It is something you **receive**.

Joy is not produced through effort.

It flows through **abiding**.

And this is where many believers get exhausted — because they’re trying to create something Christ has already offered to share.

STORY #1 — MANUFACTURED JOY VS. RECEIVED JOY

For a long time in my life, I believed the lie that joy could be found in what I could build, earn, or accumulate.

I chased money.

I chased status.

I chased possessions.

Growing up, my father used to say, “*Son, money doesn’t buy happiness — but it sure rents the crackers out of it.*”

He wasn’t teaching bad values. He was trying to be practical. He was trying to say that money can make life easier — but it can’t do the deeper work of the soul.

Somewhere along the way, I misunderstood that lesson.

I quietly began to believe that happiness and joy were the same thing — and if I could just get enough of the right things, joy would eventually follow.

And for a while, it worked... at least on the surface.

There were moments of excitement.

Moments of satisfaction.

Moments where I thought, “*This must be it.*”

But it never lasted.

The joy was fragile.

It was conditional.

It always depended on what was next.

What I didn’t realize at the time was that I wasn’t actually pursuing joy — I was manufacturing substitutes for it.

Everything changed when I surrendered my life to Christ.

I stopped trying to produce joy and started abiding in the One who gives it.

And Jesus didn’t give me joy like His.

He filled me with **His joy**.

Not circumstantial.

Not fragile.

But deep, steady, and overflowing.

For the first time, joy wasn’t something I was chasing.

It was something I was receiving.

JOY THAT ENDURES WHEN LIFE FALLS APART

If joy really is the joy of Jesus Christ living in us — not something we generate, but something we receive — then that joy has to be able to survive seasons where circumstances would normally crush it.

If joy disappears the moment life gets hard, then it was never biblical joy to begin with.

That's why the Bible does not hide suffering from us.

That's why Scripture doesn't sanitize pain.

And that's why the story of Job matters so much when we talk about joy.

Turn with me to **Job chapter 1**.

Job is introduced in a way very few people in Scripture ever are.

Job 1:1

1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

Blameless.

Upright.

God-fearing.

And just to remove any doubt, God Himself says this about Job in verse 8:

Job 1:8

⁸ And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?"

"Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth..."

What an honor for God to say that about him.

Job is not suffering because he is rebellious.

Job is not suffering because he lacks faith.

Job is not suffering because he is hiding sin.

Job is suffering because he lives in a broken world — and because God is doing something bigger than Job can see.

And in a matter of moments, everything Job had is stripped away.

Children.

Wealth.

Security.

Health.

Reputation.

What remains is grief.

And yet, in **Job 2:10**, Job says something extraordinary:

Job 2:10

¹⁰ But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?”^[a] In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

“Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive adversity?”

This is not denial.

This is not numbness.

This is not pretending pain doesn’t exist.

This is trust.

Job does not understand what is happening.

Job does not know why this is happening.

Job does not get an explanation.

But Job knows **who God is**.

And that’s the difference.

Joy that endures is not joy that understands everything — it is joy that **trusts Someone**.

JOY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS — NOT PERFORMANCE, BUT POSITION

Here’s where we need to be very careful theologically.

Job’s righteousness was real — but it was not the *source* of his joy.

It was the *fruit* of his faith.

If joy depends on how well I’m doing spiritually, joy will always be unstable.

If joy rises and falls with my obedience, my discipline, or my consistency, joy becomes fragile.

But Scripture teaches something far more secure.

Paul says in **Romans 1:17**:

Romans 1:17

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

“The righteous shall live by faith.”

And later, in **Romans 5**, he explains what that means for us:

Romans 5:17-18

17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

“For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.”

Let that phrase settle in your heart:

The free gift of righteousness.

Not earned.

Not achieved.

Not maintained by effort.

Given.

And when righteousness is received as a gift, joy becomes stable — because it is no longer tied to performance.

Christian joy flows from **position**, not performance.

From **union**, not effort.

From **abiding**, not striving.

That’s why Job could grieve and still trust.

That’s why joy can coexist with sorrow.

That’s why pain does not automatically cancel joy.

STORY #2 — CORPORATE JOY THROUGH LOSS

Church, if I can speak to us honestly for a moment — this past year has been difficult.

As a body, we have walked through a real season of loss.

We have mourned friends.

We have mourned loved ones.

We have felt the weight of grief together.

And I want to say this clearly: we *have* mourned.

We have not ignored sorrow.

We have not rushed past grief.

We have allowed ourselves to feel the weight of loss.

But here's what I've noticed — and I believe this matters deeply.

I have not seen joy leave this building.

There have been tears.

There have been heavy moments.

There have been days when the air felt thick with grief.

But we have not been overtaken by despair.

We have not been swallowed by hopelessness.

We have not lost our anchor.

And that doesn't happen naturally.

That's not emotional toughness.

That's not personality.

That's not optimism.

That is **supernatural joy**.

Even in grief, there has been peace.

Even in mourning, there has been hope.

Even in loss, there has been a steady, quiet joy underneath it all.

Not loud.

Not forced.

But real.

The kind of joy that Scripture describes.

The kind of joy that does not come from circumstances.

The kind of joy that comes from Christ Himself living in His people.

And it reminds me of the miracle at Cana.

When the wine ran out, Jesus didn't offer a temporary solution.

He didn't stretch what was left.

He didn't water it down.

He provided something that would not fail.

And in the same way, what we have experienced as a church is joy that did not run dry when circumstances changed.

Because this joy was never ours to begin with.

It is **His joy**, shared with us.

And like the wine at Cana, it does not depend on what is happening around us — it flows from who is present with us.

JOY BECAUSE OF RESCUE

Psalms 98 tells us that God has “made known His salvation.”

That salvation finds its fullest expression in Jesus Christ.

Christmas is not sentimental.

Christmas is not nostalgic.

Christmas is not about vibes.

Christmas is about **rescue**.

Paul says in **Romans 5:17–18**:

Romans 5:17-18

¹⁷ For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

“As one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.”

Adam brought sin.

Adam brought death.

Adam brought separation.

Jesus brings righteousness.

Jesus brings life.

Jesus brings restoration.

What was broken in the Garden has been restored through the cross.

That’s why joy is not optional for the believer.

It is not a personality trait.

It is not emotional preference.

It is the natural response to salvation.

JOY TO THE WORLD — NOW AND FOREVER

When we sing “*Joy to the world, the Lord is come,*” we are not just celebrating His first coming.

We are declaring a present reality and a future hope.

Joy now — because salvation is secure.

Joy later — because glory is coming.

The joy we experience today is a **foretaste**.

A preview.

A down payment.

The best wine is still to come.

One day:

- Tears will be wiped away.
- Death will be swallowed up.
- Sorrow will end.
- Joy will be complete.

But even now — even here — even in brokenness — Christ offers His joy.

Not joy like His.

His joy in us.

INVITATION — BOTH STRONG AND PASTORAL

So here's where I want to land this morning.

Some of you are here, and you have never surrendered your life to Jesus Christ.

You've chased joy in all the same places I once did.

And like me, you've discovered it doesn't last.

Jesus is offering you something different.

Not temporary happiness.

Not circumstantial peace.

His joy.

His life.

His righteousness.

And if that's you, don't leave today without responding.

Come talk to one of us.

Pray with someone.

Surrender today.

Others of you know Jesus — but your joy has leaked out.

Not because Christ has failed you.

But because you've drifted from abiding.

This is an invitation to return.

To rest.

To receive again what He freely gives.

Church, joy is not something we chase.

It is someone we abide in.

Joy to the world — the Lord has come.

Let's pray.