

Longing to Celebrate

Psalm 98

Today is a day of celebration. We have several baptisms today and as we come to celebrate again what God has done in the lives of five of our Waterbrooke family, Psalm 98 is a call to see these individuals' stories of God's work in their lives in light of the grand narrative of the gospel. We are called to stand back once again and be amazed at our God and His salvation.

Psalm 98 was the psalm that Isaac Watts used to write the psalm that we often sing at Christmas. Joy to the World. It is a psalm that calls for a massive choir to somehow convey with great joy the saving power of God. Sing to the Lord a new song because He has done marvelous things.

This is a psalm celebrating God's salvation and a call to all of creation to join the choir to recognize with joy what God has done: "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!"

Are you still staggered at what God has done in the world? Are you amazed at what God has done in your life or is willing to do in your life? Do you have a new fresh sense of the amazement and wonder of God's saving power and grace?

Here is the call of the Psalmist to sing a new song!

This song is a song of great joy in which the psalmist will not be satisfied until the entire earth is one collective choir overflowing and overjoyed at the message of the gospel.

Psalm 33:3 "Sing to him a new song!"

Psalm 40:3 "He put a new song in my mouth!"

Psalm 96:1 "Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!"

Psalm 144:9 "I will sing a new song to you, O Lord."

Isaiah 42:10 "Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth, you who go down to the sea and all that fills it, the coastland and their inhabitants."

Revelation 5:9 "And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth.'"

Another way to ask the question is what would it take to change your tune from one of continual complaining or doubt or unbelief to one of hope in salvation?

Will we ever run out of reasons to sing a new song? A billion years from now the glories of God will open up in joyful panoramic vistas that will demand a new song of joy from God's people.

The question that I want to ask is what is it that will bring this kind of collective joy. It is the coming of the Lord.

1. The First Coming of Christ (Psalm 98:1-3)
2. The Second Coming of Christ (Psalm 98:9)

I. The First Coming of Christ (Psalm 98:1-3)

We are to rejoice in salvation because God has come to save (past tense). This is a rejoicing in the very saving act that God has done.

The lyrics of Joy to the World – announce what has happened because of the coming of Jesus Christ.

Joy to the World the Lord is come,
Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare Him room!
And heaven nature sing, and heaven and nature sing.
And heaven and heaven and nature sing.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found
Far as, Far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.

- Isaac Watts, Joy to the World.

Every story of salvation is a reminder to each of us both of what God has done for us in the first coming of Christ and what we can be assured of in the second coming of Christ. When

someone is baptized, we ought to be able to look at their story and be reminded of our story and what the story of God.

We are meant to sing a new song. Let the great news of the gospel hit you afresh today in light of the testimony that God has saved and set free sinners.

a. Salvation is a wonder of God - God has done marvelous things. (98:1)

“Oh sing to the Lord a new song for He has done marvelous things.” (98:1)

What God has done is beyond what any of us could expect or imagine.

The world “marvelous” things here is often translated “wonders.”

“And he said, “Behold, I am making a covenant. **Before all your people I will do marvels**, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.” Exodus 34:10

Salvation is one of the great wonders of the world.

In terms of what God does, it is the greatest wonder of the world.

There are some amazing wonders in the world.

“When I was coming to Christ [Spurgeon was converted when he was sixteen years of age], I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this. I can recall the very day and hour when first I received [this truth] in my own soul – when [it was]...burned into my heart as with a hot iron, and I can recollect how I felt that I had grown [suddenly] from a babe into a man...” [Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, vol. I, 164]

“Sin doesn’t surprise me. Salvation takes my breath away.” – Ligon Duncan

Does salvation amaze you? Does it take your breath away.

The angels in heaven never stop rejoicing over each and every sinner who comes to faith and to repentance. “Just so, I tell you there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” Luke 15:7

“Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” Luke 10:20

Upon the cross of Jesus

Mine eye at times can see

The very dying form of One who suffered there for me:

And from my stricken heart with tears

Two wonders I confess

The wonders of redeeming love

And my unworthiness.

The stunning reality that God is not simply a God who stood aloof and commanded us to turn from sin and to turn back to Him. He is the God who gave of Himself. He gave what was most precious in order to rescue and to secure. He gave up His Son for you. He gave His holy Spirit to seal you.

Every baptism ought to blow us away again. God has done it again.

We should marvel that God continues to forgive. He continues to call. He continues to work in the lives of people to make them like Him.

Amazing.

Don't grow accustomed to God's amazing deliverance of sinners to Himself.

Are you blown away by a holy holy holy God coming down and taking the guilt and shame of awful sinners upon Himself?

Does John 3:16 fill you with awe and wonder and praise? God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life?

Parents think of these kids and what God has done.

Peter and Lynn think of this story of God's working in your life.

It should stagger us that the God of the universe would send His Son into the world to rescue us. It should blow us away that it is all of grace. It should stun us that He has promised never to leave us or forsake us even though we are a mess!

b. Salvation is clearly a work of the Lord. God has done the saving.

"His right hand and his holy arm has worked salvation for him." (Psalm 98:1)

Every baptism, every saving work is a direct rescue by the God of the universe.

1 Peter – Blessed be the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ who caused us to be born again to a living hope.

Jonah – "Salvation is of the Lord."

God is the hound of heaven who comes and rescues us and makes us long for him.

Imagine the rescue planned in heaven and Christ Jesus coming down to go to the cross and he had Hazel, Hudson, Audrey, Peter and Lynn in his view. How he sent his Spirit to come and to rescue you – to open up your eyes and to show you your sin and to bring you to Jesus?

Luther captures the point autobiographically: “I believe that I cannot, by my own reason or strength, believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me by his gifts, sanctified and preserved me in the true faith.”

David Garner – Salvation is a miraculous work of God

New Birth:

“Christ does not effectuate salvation on the basis of some dormant human capacity in the unregenerate soul. Scripture describes the unbeliever both as unwilling and unable to believe (Rom. 8:9–11). Dead to God’s will and word, cold to Christ and his salvation, deaf to God’s voice and promise, and devoid of any modicum of spiritual life, the unbeliever needs new life. It is the Spirit who gives it, when he sovereignly, efficaciously, and irresistibly⁶ takes residence in every believer (John 14:16–17) and unites us to the resurrected Christ (Eph. 2:5).”

Conviction of Sin

“Without the Spirit, there is no spiritual awareness of the heinousness, the sinfulness of sin. And for a sinner to become convinced of Christ’s salvation, the Holy Spirit first exposes and convicts him of his sin (John 16:8–11).”

Faith is a gift from God:

“Faith is a sacred enablement—a Holy Spirit-ual and wholly spiritual capacity enabling one to see Christ as he is, Savior and Mediator, and to embrace him in his full saving adequacy.”

“Saving faith is an active thing, which compels the believing heart to rely upon Christ personally, receive him savingly, and rest upon him permanently.”

He breathed life in you. He didn’t find us flailing around asking to be saved. Ephesians said – we were dead in our trespasses and sins. We were under the dominion of the prince of darkness. We were under condemnation.

If ever there was a rescue mission, it was God coming to get us.

It’s not like the Princess Bride, where we were “mostly dead”. We were dead, but God made us alive in Christ Jesus.

Every salvation story is a story of God resurrecting the dead.
Every genuine Christian has experienced a resurrection.
God did what we would not do. God did what we could not do.
He made us alive together with Christ.
We were beyond hope humanly speaking.
God did what only God could do. God did what no one else would do.
He made His enemies His friends.
He made dry bones live.
He gave spiritual life to those who had absolutely none.
There is only one explanation that anyone would trust and follow Christ – God.

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:4-8

“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Titus 3:3-7

c. Salvation is a Word from the Lord (Psalm 98:2a)

“The Lord has made known his salvation;”

God has revealed himself to be unlike any other God. He is the God who saves. He is the God who redeems. He is the God who forgives and heals and restores.
This is what God has made known and desires to make known.

1 Timothy 1:15 ESV

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

This is the incredible thing that we also out to rejoice in. God has done this saving act and then announced through this prophets and apostles and people that He is the God who saves sinners.

Every baptism is a word from God that sinners will be received. It is an announcement that Christ Jesus did come into the world to save sinners. When the Lord saves young people, it is a message that you don't have to prove yourself, just come. You don't have to repay God, just come. You don't have to be someone of importance or significance, just come.

I love in our study of Luke's gospel how God continually reiterated over and over and over again that He had come into the world to align himself with broken sinners who would humble themselves, repent of sin, and come to Him.

God has acted in such a way that the message was spread rapidly in Jerusalem of what people had seen and heard. People flocked to follow Jesus because he was like no other rabbi or prophet. God sent the apostles out and commanded us to go to the ends of the earth that people might hear that there is a God who receives the outcast and sinner.

When Jesus started his public ministry, he said,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18,19)

What a privilege it is for us to see the salvation of our God in Jesus Christ!

The heralding of God's year of Jubilee (the year of God's favor) is a great reason for us to celebrate today. God calls people who have made a royal mess of things to come to him and He will receive them, restore them, and make them children of the living God.

Listen to Isaiah 55 –

"Come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;

And he who has no money, come, buy and eat!

Come buy wine and milk, without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor

For that which does not satisfy?

Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

Incline you ear, and come to me; hear that your soul may live;

And I will make with you an everlasting covenant,

my steadfast, sure love for David!"

God in Christ offers to make an everlasting covenant with those who have absolutely nothing to merit it. The bread of life, the new wine of the kingdom, the saving grace and new life and eternal status of sonship and royalty is announced to all those who come by faith!

Sing a new song about that! Announce to people that God receives sinners freely!

d. Salvation is a welcome from the Lord. The Lord has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.

“He has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.” (Psalm 98:2)

As God saves His people, he announces to the nations around that this is not a God like any other God. He doesn't capriciously demand that people perform religious acts like the gods of the nations. He graciously acts on our behalf so that anyone can come freely. His righteousness is the ground of our justification. God has made it clear through His salvation that “the righteous shall live by faith.”

This is what transformed the apostle Paul – that God would save the Gentiles and the Jews by the same means – by faith.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’” Romans 1:16-17

“Yhwh’s acts of deliverance for Israel (vv. 1–3) are good news for other peoples (vv. 4–9) because they reveal the kind of God Yhwh is and the way Yhwh also acts for other peoples.” (John Goldingay)

This is great news for all peoples. God is unlike any other God. He saves by grace. He saves according to His mercy. What God has done for and through Israel by sending them the Christ, God does so that the nations might turn from their gods and flee to Jesus.

This again ought to amaze us. God has made it his purpose to save people from Israel and Canada and Korea and Brazil and Jamaica... to the ends of the earth.

This plan for Israel is for the Gentiles. Most of us are Gentiles here and yet God's saving plan has come to us and we who were once outside of the covenants of God have been brought near.

Isaiah 45:22 “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God and there is no other.”

Isaiah 52:10 “The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”

God has saved in such a way that **He has rolled out the welcome mat of gospel grace to any and all who would come to him from every tribe and tongue and nation.**

This God has opened up a real open opportunity, a level access point, for all the peoples.

I remember coming into an airport from an international flight and having to go through U.S. customs in Houston and thinking to myself, there is no chance that I am going to make my connecting flight. Then suddenly someone appeared and said, "American citizens this way." Suddenly, I had hope that I would be okay. **Suddenly, I went from the back of the line to the front of the line.**

In the gospel, Christ has come and said to those who thought that their past, their sin, their failures, put them at the back of the line of salvation, God has opened up a clear access point. Gentiles always thought that they were at the back of the line for salvation. Right now, in Christ, you can move to the front of the line in Jesus Christ and become a child of God and a citizen of heaven.

e. Salvation is an Assurance from God. God will keep everything He has promised.

God has kept His promise to Israel. He will keep His promise to us.

"He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel." Psalm 98:3

The Old Testament is largely a great big promise that God would one day send David's son to deliver His people and establish an everlasting kingdom.

Psalm 98 anticipates that first advent of Christ, the first coming of Christ, when God fulfilled all the promises of the Old Testament. He would crush the head of the serpent with the heel of the woman's seed. God kept his promise to Abraham that through his seed He would bless the nations. God kept his promise to David that he would put his son on the throne to rule forever and ever.

God kept his promise through Isaiah that the suffering servant would bear the iniquities of us all.

God kept his promise to all the covenants of Israel and God will keep his promise to us that He will never leave us or forsake us.

In the Old Testament, they were told that the rainbow was the sign that God would never completely destroy the world with a flood ever again. In the Gospel, the cross is the sign that God will never destroy those who take shelter, not in an ark, but in Christ. Christ is the ark we take shelter in and God will keep us forever.

God keeps His promise that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Many of us know that our greatest disappointments in life are from people who made promises to us that they did not keep. Spouses that did not keep their promise. Parents that did not keep their promise to be there for us. Friends who betrayed us.

God has kept his promise to Israel at great sacrifice to himself and He is faithful to keep all his promises.

Psalm 15:4 says that a holy person is one “who swears to his own hurt and does not change” God has sworn to his own heart and will not change.

f. Salvation shows there is a wideness in God’s mercy.

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. (98:3)

This has happened here today. When the psalm was written, where we stand were the ends of the earth. The gospel has gone to every continent. The message of the gospel has become known on every continent around the world and it continues to spread. It has gone to every nation. It is now going to every people group.

But stop and recognize that across the world from Israel, where we stand today, God has saved!

Jesus said “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.”

God didn’t send his people on a fool’s errand. God sent his people to the ends of the earth because Jesus would save the Hazel’s and Hudson’s and Audrey’s and Peter and Lynn’s. We are celebrating that God would show his saving acts to the ends of the earth.

Does it not amaze you that this is the God we love and serve? Does it now make you want everyone around and everything to turn and celebrate?

And this is just the beginning. It is not only what God has done in Christ’s first coming that we celebrate but what God is going to do in Christ’s second coming that we rejoice in!

II. Rejoice - The Second Coming Of Christ is a source of great joy for us!

“Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it!
Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together
Before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness
and the peoples with equity.” (Psalm 98:8-9)

There are two thoughts here:

- First, **God will right every wrong done during this life.**
- Second, **God will reign in righteousness over us forever.**

Both of these things bring joy.

“One of the things that rob us of our joy is that there are many things in our lives are not right and they cannot be made right... The coming of the Lord is a very, very important truth and it is for our comfort. For when he comes, He will settle all accounts and He will put things right.” Ligon Duncan

God comes to judge the earth:

Psalm 96:11-13

“Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.”

Matthew 25:31-32 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him all the nations, and he will separate people from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”

1 Corinthians 4:5 “Therefore, do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.”

2 Timothy 4:1 “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and kingdom, preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”

There is this great hope that all injustices will be addressed. All injuries will be rectified. We can rest assured that God will deal justly with every injustice we have ever suffered. We know in the gospel that God will not leave sin unpunished. We either try to hide and then

face the judgment or we flee to Jesus who has become for us the righteousness of God. Jesus has taken our sin and given us righteousness.

However, there is more to this. God judging is not just the time at the end of the ages when God will judge the living and the dead. For the psalmist, the Judges were those who were given to protect the people of God from enemies and from corruption. The judges were a shield and protection and deliver from their enemies.

Jeremiah 23:5

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”

God will send Jesus and Jesus will reign righteously.

Just imagine how many people live in a world where they are oppressed by cruel dictators. I was watching the plane crash this week that killed Euvgeny Prigozhin, the leader of the Wagner Group, the paramilitary group that has been fighting on behalf of Russia in the Ukraine. After he opposed Putin, everyone was expecting his death. So many people live under cruel dictators who simply crush and kill those that don't yield to their leadership. **Cruel men get crushed by cruel men. But kind men get crushed by cruel men too!**

Isn't it good news that our Judge, our King, is the One who laid down His life for us? We are going to live in a world of justice and peace one day under King Jesus.

We are meant to celebrate now and to rejoice and sing a new song because the dominion of Satan has been brought down at the cross and the reign of sin and Satan over this world is clearly coming to an end.

Do you have a new song in your heart today?

Do you have deep joy that supersedes all circumstances in your life?