

The Songs of Christmas

ADVENT: Day 6

"JOY TO THE WORLD"

Joy to the world, the Lord is come;

Let earth receive her King!

Let every heart prepare him room

And heaven and nature sing!

And heaven and nature sing!

And heaven . . . and heaven . . . and nature sing.

"Joy to the World" wasn't written as a Christmas carol.

In fact, it wasn't a song until a hundred years after its initial words were penned within a poem.

Then again, the poem was based on words composed thousands of years before.

So, how exactly did one of the most beloved Christmas carols originate?

The story behind the song

Isaac Watts was an English minister in the early 1700s, credited with writing approximately 750 hymns. In 1719, he wrote a book of poems based on the Psalms, title *The Psalms of David: Imitated in the language of the New Testament, and applied to the Christian state and worship*.

As his lengthy subtitle reveals, he wanted his readers to see Old Testament passages through a New Testament perspective. As it pertains to "Joy to the World," Watts longed for people to see Jesus as their King.

Consequently, he used Psalm 98:7–9 as inspiration for his poem: "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."

"Joy to the World" was written one hundred years after Isaac Watts had written his book. It is an adaptation of Psalm 98 from Isaac Watts' book.

Share the wonders

The last stanza of "Joy to the World" says:

*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.*

When we sing "Joy to the World," we're called to remember that Jesus isn't just a baby whose birth we celebrate at Christmas. Rather, he's the King of Christmas.

Isaac Watts wanted people to understand that this King rules the world with truth and grace. But it's our job to help others know the "wonders of His love."

People need to experience those "wonders" in our service and know God's love for them. People need to experience joy at Christmas (and all year round). And we all desperately need Jesus to be our King.

Jesus told his disciples, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy might be in you, and your joy may be full" (John 15:11). He wanted them to have his joy, the joy that comes from choosing God as King.

Will you make Jesus your King and live with his joy?
And will you share that joy, both in word and deed, with all you meet?
That is how you give "joy to the world" and worship the King.

"The Songs Tell the Story"
An Advent Devotional By: Janet Denison