

Joy: The Song of the Redeemed

Psalm 98

12-14-25

Good morning, church! My name is Mark Potter, and I'm grateful to serve as the Campus Pastor here at our Overland Park campus. If you're visiting with us, this is our third Sunday in our Advent sermon series. Two Sundays ago, Pastor Todd launched our series with the theme of Hope from Psalm 2. Then, last Sunday we experienced our annual Walk to the Manger Christmas musical, while Pastor Greg preached about the Peace of Christ from the Twenty Third Psalm at our South KC campus. If you missed either of those sermons, I'd encourage you to go back and catch them on our website.

Today, on our third Sunday of Advent, I get to preach on one of my favorite topics, the topic of Joy.

But before we get into the Scripture passage for today, I want you to take a moment and think of a time in your life when you experienced great joy. Perhaps some of you are in that season now, while others of you can remember a time when you experienced joy in the past. What image comes to your mind? For most of us, it is an image that is rooted in a proclamation of good news that followed an extended period of waiting, long-suffering, and toil.

For some of you, this picture represents great joy (show Super Bowl victory pic). This is the front page of the KC Star showing Patrick Mahomes hoisting the Lombardi trophy in Super Bowl 54, which was the Chiefs first Super Bowl win in 50 years. This image may or may not be hanging in my office.

For others, this is a picture that represents great joy (show "you're hired" pic). Maybe you were feeling underutilized or unhappy with your former job, but then you finally got the break you were hoping for. Who wouldn't want to work for these people?

For several of you here today, this picture brings you great joy (show multiethnic BLESS group pic). This is a picture of one of our international BLESS groups that was taken just over a week ago. It's a collection of individuals that God has brought to Colonial from all over the world who now view themselves as a tight-knit family.

Still for others, this is a picture of great joy (show Mark and Emily's wedding photo). Well, maybe your source of joy is not a picture from *our* wedding, but a picture from *your* wedding. After years of heartache, and hoping, and waiting, God finally led you to the 'right' person that you are now able to spend the rest of your life with.

Or perhaps your picture of joy looks similar to this (show Potter sonogram pic) because it reminds you of countless prayers being answered. I want to reassure you that my wife is NOT pregnant. This is an old picture. It's a sonogram image of our twins Andrew and Samuel who are now in second grade. After five miscarriages, this picture continues to fill Emily and me with unspeakable joy... even though we live in a perpetual state of exhaustion.

Or, your image of joy may include a picture of your family on a beach, like this one (show our family's beach pic). For our family, this picture represents the joy of being declared cancer free after God healed me and saved me from a life-or-death battle.

Finally, your picture of joy may include a furry addition to your family like this one (show picture of Ruby). This is our dog, Ruby, back when she was a puppy. Ruby is a big source of joy for us and for our kids, except when she escapes, which is a weekly occurrence. All of our neighbors know Ruby as the friendly neighborhood escape artist.

There are many images we could point to that bring us great joy. But all the best pictures of joy point us to this picture of joy (show baby Jesus manger pic).

My sermon this morning is titled, "Joy: The Song of the Redeemed," and our primary text comes from Psalm 98, which is a messianic psalm that anticipates the birth of a Savior.

With this in mind, let's stand together to read Psalm 98:1-9:

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!
⁷Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who dwell in it!
⁸Let the rivers clap their hands;
let the hills sing for joy together
⁹before the LORD, for he comes
to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

Please be seated. Let's pray together (prayer).

My sermon is titled, "Joy: The Song of the Redeemed" and it has three subheadings:

I. The LORD'S Salvation

- II. A Joyful Noise
- III. The Coming Savior

Let's begin with:

- I. The LORD's Salvation

In reviewing our text, we quickly learn that Israel's joy was rooted in salvation. But whose salvation is the text referring to? Who is responsible for salvation? Is it Israel's salvation? Or David's? Or Abraham's? Or Moses'? Does salvation come through an earthly prophet, or priest, or king? Is salvation dependent upon those with certain skin color, or those from a certain country, or caste, or class? Is salvation primarily about *you*, or about *me*?

See, when we come to a passage like Psalm 98, it's tempting to personalize it and westernize it to make salvation about me, as if it's referring to *my* individual salvation, or the salvation of *my people*. But in re-reading the text, the psalm writer is crystal clear who the author of salvation is.

Salvation is not granted by a king or a president or a military leader. It's not achieved through a rabbi or a prophet or a priest. It's not the result of man's good works or personal merit. It's not authored by AI, or by you, or me.

Salvation solely belongs to the LORD, Yahweh, the God of the universe. It's *His* salvation. Listen again:

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*.

² *The LORD* has made known *his* salvation;
he has revealed *his* righteousness in the sight of the nations.

³ *He* 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*.

-Psalm 98:1-3, emphasis added

Still unconvinced? Think about the Old Testament Bible stories that many of you learned as a child, including the stories of Abraham, Sarah, Noah, Joseph, Ruth, David, Daniel, etc. These stories included some the "marvelous things" that the psalmist was undoubtedly alluding to.

Who saved Noah's family from the great flood? Who saved Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego from burning to death in the fiery furnace? Who saved David from being hunted down by King Saul? Who saved Daniel from the jaws of the lions? Who saved Isaac from being sacrificed? Who saved Jonah from drowning in the open sea? Who saved the Israelites from starvation in the wilderness after being delivered through the parting of the Red Sea?

You say, "But that was then, and this is now. It's different."

Imagine getting diagnosed with cancer and trying to perform your own surgery. Or imagine getting shipwrecked in the open sea and trying to swim 10,000 miles back to shore. Or imagine getting stuck on the top of Mount Everest in a blizzard with no food or water. In those situations, you can't save yourself. You need someone else to come and rescue you.

The truth is that you didn't make the rules. God did. You didn't save your marriage. God did. You didn't restore your health. God did. You didn't overcome your depression, or your addiction, or your anxiety. God did.

I could go on and on, but you get the point: Salvation belongs to God. Therefore, we, like the Israelites, must resist the temptation to believe that we had anything to do with our salvation.

Listen, the Bible is clear:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

-Ephesians 2:8-9, ESV

Salvation is by *God's* grace. It is *God's* gift, and it is *God's* doing, not in any way dependent upon your or my good works. This is cause for great joy because it releases us from the impossible task of trying to save ourselves. We are saved, instead, only by the righteousness, faithfulness, and steadfast love of God.

But Psalm 98 was not merely a joyful reminder to the Israelites of how God had saved them in the past. It also pointed them forward to what God would do to save them from their sins once and for all through the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer.

This leads me to my second subheading:

II. A Joyful Noise

Psalm 98 continues:

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

⁵ Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody!

⁶ With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD!

-Psalm 98:4-6

This section begins and ends with the phrase, "make a joyful noise." In context, a joyful noise could also be translated as a triumphant, spontaneous shout of jubilation.

It's the same triumphant, spontaneous shout that would've occurred when an army was victorious, or when debts were cancelled, or when slaves were freed like during the Year of Jubilee. It is the also the word translated 'shout aloud' in Zechariah 9:9, the prophecy that was

fulfilled on Palm Sunday when the crowd shouted “*Hosanna*” as Jesus entered Jerusalem on the donkey.

In modern terms, this word could be likened to the spontaneous shout that may occur when your favorite team wins the championship, or if you were to land a deal on Shark Tank, or win “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire.” From a child’s perspective, it’s the shout that accompanies unwrapping your favorite Christmas gift, or scoring your first basket, or experiencing the first drop of a rollercoaster.

Should we practice our shouts of jubilee altogether? The truth is, we already did. Each and every Sunday when we gather in corporate worship, we make a joyful noise by singing praises the LORD.

The thing is, when your life has been saved by God and transformed by Christ, He puts a new song on your lips and a joyful noise within your heart. But you don’t have to wait until Sunday to praise God. You can make a joyful noise at any time on any day anywhere under any circumstances.

Amazingly, by the power of the Holy Spirit, God’s joy can be seen even in suffering. I am reminded of when the jailer and other prisoners were listening to Paul and Silas sing praises to God behind bars in Acts 16. This is an example of the Song of the Redeemed.

All throughout the Biblical canon, we can read songs of praise that aim to give God the glory. One could argue that much of the Bible is, in fact, one big songbook. Three whole books of the Bible are comprised of song lyrics (Psalms, Lamentations, Song of Solomon).

In addition, there are numerous other famous songs sprinkled throughout the Biblical narrative including the Song of Moses (Exodus 15), Hannah’s Song (1 Samuel 2), Deborah’s Song (Judges 5), Isaiah’s Hymn (Isaiah 6:3), the Christ Hymn (Phil 2), the Song of the Lamb (Rev 15), and, of course, Mary’s Song also known as the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55).

Many commentators believe that Psalm 98 is a precursor to Mary’s Song, which says:

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

⁵² he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”
-Luke 1:46-55, ESV

Can you hear the echoes of Psalm 98 in Mary’s Magnificat? There are a lot of similarities. Both are songs of praise that celebrate God's power, holiness, and faithfulness in bringing salvation and justice to the world. Both texts point to God’s extraordinary deeds. Both use similar imagery of God's physical strength to achieve salvation by His outstretched arm. Both emphasize God's covenantal faithfulness to His people, Israel. And both passages speak of God's redemptive work to all nations among all generations.

Essentially, the Magnificat is Mary's declaration that this Messianic prophecy is now being fulfilled through the coming birth of Jesus. Simply put, Jesus is the Messianic fulfillment of Psalm 98. In other words, Mary’s Song is the next verse in the Song of the Redeemed.

This leads me to my third and final subheading:

III. The Coming Savior

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

During the final section of this song, all of creation bursts forth in praise as it anticipates the coming Messiah, the one who will come to judge all people of the earth with righteousness and equity.

In Luke’s account of the birth of Christ, Luke shares that an angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds and said, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”
-Luke 2:10-11 ESV

Christ’s birth was good news. Why? The Israelites believed it was good news because, as you’ll recall, the nation of Israel had been enslaved, exiled, and oppressed for the better part of her existence. She had endured centuries of warfare as well as political and religious persecution. Not to mention the ongoing effects of the consequences of idol worship and disobedience to Yahweh. As a result, she felt unjustly treated and she longed for a Defender, Deliverer,

Redeemer, and King; Israel craved a just Judge who could finally overtake the evil Roman Empire and lead her into a position of power.

Then, suddenly, in the midst of Israel's cries for justice, God brought forth a Redeemer, a Savior by the name of Jesus Immanuel. But Jesus didn't come on a high horse with a sword in one hand and shield in the other; He came quietly, in the humblest way possible, as a baby born into a cold, dark, dirty, wet animal feeding trough because there was no room for Him in the inn.

Much to Israel's chagrin, Jesus didn't come preaching freedom from hardship, opposition, or turmoil. Per usual, things would get worse before they would get better. This was certainly no health and wealth gospel. Instead, Jesus came preaching repentance, and liberation from the penalty of sin.

To be sure, Jesus brought good news to the nation of Israel and to the world, but it was not exactly the kind of news they were hoping for. It was the news they needed to hear but didn't necessarily want to hear. Have you ever received news like that? A truth that you needed to hear but one that you didn't know that you needed?

When Jesus began His public ministry, He announced that this was year of the Lord's favor, signifying freedom from sin, debt, and spiritual bondage while ushering in a new, eternal Jubilee of grace and restoration through faith in Him.

Jesus came to forgive us of our sin, offering us eternal life by sacrificing His life for us on the cross. His sinless life and subsequent death served as the perfect, final atonement for sin, which we could not achieve on our own.

Church, the good news of the gospel is this: God came near to us so we can come near to Him.

Through the incarnation of Christ, God willingly entered our dirt and our mess and our sorrow so we could come close to Him and be declared holy, righteous, and clean. This is cause for great rejoicing!

“God's desire is to transform the misery, not bypass it.”

-Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*

Jesus intentionally enters our messy lives to transform them for His glory. He is the only one who can turn our mourning into dancing (Psalm 30:11) and our sorrow into joy (John 16:24).

You see, it's relatively easy to experience joy when times are good. But the secret to the Christian life is to experience joy when times are hard.

According to St. Francis of Assisi, perfect joy means coming to Christ in your brokenness when you feel dirty, exhausted, hungry, and cold; when you feel rejected, discouraged, deflated, and dismissed. For “If we accept such injustice, such cruelty, such contempt with patience, without being ruffled and without murmuring... and if we bear all these injuries with patience and joy,

thinking of the sufferings of our blessed Lord, which we would share out of love for Him... here, finally, is perfect joy.”

-The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi, Chapter 8

Now, I know what some of you are thinking: that’s impossible! You’re right. It’s impossible to achieve on our own. We need God’s help. The good news is that He would love to intervene. Just ask Him. “Lord, help us! Help us to be more joyful in our suffering.”

Listen, I don’t know where you’re at today, but I do know that the enemy is real. And that Satan is the thief of joy. He has come to steal, kill, and destroy your joy. That’s the bad news.

But the good news is that Satan is not in charge. He may win some individual battles, but he has lost the war – praise God!

You may be here this morning needing to have your joy restored. If so, I’m glad you’re here. You’re in the right place.

Maybe you came here this morning feeling trapped, or afraid, or crushed by the weight of your own sin. If so, I’ve got good news, for Jesus proclaims:

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

-Matt 20:28

Maybe you came here feeling lost, lonely, abandoned, or estranged. If so, I’ve got good news, for the Bible proclaims:

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

-Luke 19:10

Maybe you came here feeling overwhelmed or discouraged by trying to live up to God’s perfect standards. If so, I’ve got good news, for Jesus proclaims:

“I have not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill them.”

-Matt 5:17

Maybe you came here feeling like you’re under spiritual attack, convinced that the enemy is winning because he is robbing you of your joy. If so, I’ve got good news, for Jesus proclaims:

“I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

-John 10:10b

In short, Jesus came to reconcile the broken relationship between God and humanity, making a way for us to experience eternal life, which leads to ultimate joy.

To experience this eternal life, you must recognize your sin and repent – that is, turn away from it and ask Jesus to be the Lord of your life. I agree with the Apostle Paul who writes: “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.”

-1 Tim 1:15, ESV

What’s more, the Scripture is clear that Jesus will come again. This time, as the psalmists writes, He will come to judge the earth with righteousness and equity (Psalm 98:9). This is the climax of our Psalm 98 prophecy, when Jesus will come again in a visible yet unexpected manner to judge the whole world and save those who await Him.

This is the period of human history that we are currently living in, somewhere between the already and the not yet. With Christ’s incarnation, the Kingdom of God has already been established, but its glorious consummation awaits His return.

You see, Scripture says that one day, when Christ returns, every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:10-11). As part of God’s restoration of all things, Christ will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away (Rev 21:4).

Not only that, but there will no longer be anything accursed. And the Lamb of God will be seated in the throne of God, and His servants will worship Him. We will see His face, and His name will be on our foreheads. And night will be no more. We will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be our light, and we will reign forever and ever (Rev 22:3-5).

And at that time, Jesus promises that our sorrow will turn to joy, and our joy will be full (John 16:24).

Friends, Christ has come to us, and He will return to us. In the meantime, we must come to Him.

What does this mean? It means, repent of your sin. That is, turn away from your selfish desires and turn toward Jesus. Set your mind on things above. Pray to Him in your suffering and ask Him to fill you with His unending joy. Invite Him to dwell in your heart and become the Lord of your life.

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done marvelous things!

Let’s pray together.