



FROM THE COLLEGE CHAPLAIN

Boring church music and a father's challenge inspired one of the greatest carols of all time that's not about Christmas!

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) is best known for writing the song, Joy to the World. He wrote it, despite disliking church music because he thought it was dull. It was his father who gave him a challenge to do something about it.

This set Watts on a lifelong pursuit to write songs that praised Jesus and reminded Christians of their hope in his saving work on the cross. This is how he came to write the popular song that we sing at this time of year.



One day he was reading Psalm 98, and verse 4 gripped him:

***Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth,
burst into jubilant song with music.***

And this is exactly what Watts set out to do with Joy to the World.

But even though its sung at Christmas it is not about the story of Jesus birth. It's actually the story about Christ's return—his second coming.

You can see it in the lyrics. Verse 1 says;

*Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing*

The earth did not receive Jesus, but like sheep, we went astray. But, there will be a day when this will not be so.

Verse 3 talks about sins and sorrows being no more:

*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*

If you have lived on this earth for more than two minutes, you know that this is not our current experience. But there will be a fulfillment of all Christ's work that is not fully expressed this side of eternity. So we have hope. And that brings joy despite our circumstances.

The final verse says:

He rules the world with truth and grace,

And makes the nations prove

The glories of his righteousness,

And wonders of his love

These final lines speak of how the nations will take an active role in revealing the glory of God. That certainly isn't today, but that day will be wonderful!

It's a wonderful song that can be sung at any time of year, even Christmas!

I pray that you and your family experience something of the joy expressed in this song that is found in Jesus.

Have a very blessed Christmas.

Rev Stuart Tye

College Chaplain
