

God Is Gracious

“Now an angel of the Lord appeared to him,
standing to the right of the altar of incense.

Zechariah was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him.

But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zechariah,
for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son,
and you shall name him John. You will have joy and gladness,
and many will rejoice over his birth.’”

Luke 1:11-14 (NASB)

A hymn we have reserved for the Christmas season is Isaac Watts’ grand hymn “Joy To The World”. Oddly enough Watts never imagined his hymn being sung for only a few Sundays a year. Watts wrote this hymn as a description of Jesus’ second coming NOT His first! I’m sorry if you find this strange but it is true. Watts did not even celebrate Christmas!

However, there was much joy of God’s people at the time of the coming of Christ. But another cause for joy in the land at that time was the coming of John the Baptist. No one connects the Baptist with joy, but he certainly stirred the Messianic hopes of the people with his rugged preaching on repentance. Some even thought John might be the long-expected Messiah, a notion he denied.

John’s name means, “God is gracious” and God never was more gracious than when He sent His Son into the world to live, die and be raised again for sinners. John acted as the forerunner for

the long-awaited Messiah. He stirred the nation to its roots.

God’s covenant community indeed became joyful at the preaching of Messiah’s forerunner and joy was also experienced at the preaching of great David’s greater Son. Pray the message of Christmas will bring joy to the hearts of countless millions worldwide this month.

This joyful season, sing Watts grand hymn based on Psalm 98 if you will (I plan to sing it this month) and be glad our glorious, gracious God sent His beloved Son in Whom He was well pleased.

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,
the Savior reigns!

Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods,
rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat,
the sounding joy

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

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