

The famous hymn written by Isaac Watts in 1719 was originally intended to declare the second coming of King Jesus. But “Joy to the World” is vastly popular as a Christmas hymn that rejoices in the Advent — the first coming — of Jesus as a baby and Redeemer of a broken world.

Jesus’ first coming sets the stage for His glorious return as King of kings and Lord of lords. And in that, we rejoice with the anthem of Psalm 98, the basis for the original penning of this great celebratory hymn:

“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music ... shout for joy before the LORD, the King ... for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness...” (Psalm 98:4-6, 9).

This Christmas, we will sing “Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King...” as our declaration of hope because of Jesus’ first coming. We will also continue rejoicing in expectation of His second coming. King Jesus restores lives, revives churches, and awakens the lost to their need for Him.

Joy to the world! Come, Lord Jesus. Come and rule the world with truth and grace.

1 Yesterday was the First Sunday in Advent. Pray for the world to embrace the truth that our hope rests in knowing “his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation” for all who believe. May all know that “he has done marvelous things” through His coming to save the lost (Psalm 98:1).

2 Praise God because “the LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.” Pray for an awakening of lost people to see Jesus as the hope of the world (Psalm 98:2).

3 God remembers “his love and his faithfulness to Israel” and His people. Pray for a revival of love and hope that awakens the Church to eagerly spread the good news that Jesus has come and is coming again (Psalm 98:3a).

4 Jesus has come and “all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.” Pray for the Church to be revived to the hope that Jesus is coming again—and now is the time to share the gospel (Psalm 98:3b).

5 Pray for a worldwide spiritual awakening that causes all the earth to “shout for joy to the LORD ... burst into jubilant song with music ... shout for joy before the LORD, the King.” Pray that all people will long to see the second coming of King Jesus (Psalm 98:4-6).

6 Pray for a growing anticipation that Jesus is coming to “judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.” Pray that in a world of turmoil, people will see King Jesus as their only hope for salvation and restoration (Psalm 98:9).

7 Today is the second Sunday in Advent. Ask God to use His Church to “prepare the way for the LORD” and a “highway for our God” by proclaiming the peace of Jesus to a lost and chaotic world (Isaiah 40:3).

8 The enemies of Christ will raise up obstacles to true peace, but we can confidently pray the promise that “every valley shall be raised up, mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level” and the glory of our Lord will be seen (Isaiah 40:4).

9 Jesus brings peace to our world through His gift of salvation. Pray that in the days to come, “the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all the people will see it together.” Pray for a gospel awakening to sweep our nation and beyond (Isaiah 40:5).

10 Pray that believers are empowered by the Spirit to “proclaim peace ... bring good tidings ... proclaim salvation” and shout to the world, “Your God reigns!” Pray for urgency to share the gospel as we await Jesus’ second coming (Isaiah 52:7).

11 As the world groans under the weight of sin and despair, pray this assurance: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” Ask God to deliver your loved ones from bondage and plant within them the hope of His return and final defeat of Satan and evil (Romans 16:20).

12 As a part of the body of Christ, you are called to peace. Pray that “the peace of Christ” rules in your heart in such tangible ways that people are drawn to Jesus and the hope that one day His return will establish peace throughout the earth (Colossians 3:15).

13 Rejoice in knowing that the “Prince of Peace” has come and the “government will be on his shoulders.” Ask God to awaken this nation to the hope that Jesus is coming again and will make all things new (Isaiah 9:6).

14 Today is the third Sunday in Advent. We need not fear present troubles because of the angel’s announcement at Jesus’ birth: “I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.” Pray that your life exudes joy because Jesus has come and is coming again (Luke 2:10).

15 Ask God to renew a heart of worship in your church as you “burst into songs of joy together ... for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.” Pray that your church is characterized by overflowing joy at the goodness of God (Isaiah 52:9).

16 Ask God to fill His Church with resounding joy, “for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.” Pray that revived hearts of His people will impact communities with the gospel and the hope of King Jesus coming again (Isaiah 12:6).

17 Pray that despite trials and struggles, you will proclaim, “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.” Pray that you can point loved ones to the hope of Jesus’ return as He makes all things new (Habakkuk 3:18).

18 In times of discouragement and uncertainty, ask Jesus to “restore to [you] the joy of [His] salvation.” Invite Him to “grant [you] a willing spirit” that sustains you with a renewed anticipation of His coming to renew all things (Psalm 51:12).

19 Pray for unbelieving family and friends to be “filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy” because they have encountered the living Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that they will believe and embrace the joy of “the salvation of [their] souls” (1 Peter 1:8-9).

20 Ask God for a renewed sense of His presence and power through His people. Invite Him to “spread [His] protection over them, that those who love [His] name may rejoice in [Him].” Pray for the Church to be bold in declaring the urgency of the gospel (Psalm 5:11).

21 Today is the fourth Sunday in Advent: Praise God for defining love for us through Jesus: “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” Praise God that He will one day send His Son again to make all things new (1 John 4:10).

22 Declare today, “I love you, LORD, my strength.” Pray for a revival of love and deep devotion to God in your loved ones and your church. Pray that they will know the wonders of His love (Psalm 18:1).

23 Rejoice in the great love of Christ and pray, “Let his banner over me be love.” Pray that you will in turn radiate that love to others as you point people to Jesus as Savior and Coming King (Song of Songs 2:4b).

24 As you celebrate Christmas Eve, pray for people to believe that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” Pray that the birth of Jesus is a reminder that the light of His glory fills the earth—and He is coming again to defeat evil forever (John 1:5).

25 At the birth of Jesus, the angels declared, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” Pray for your loved ones to know the favor of God by embracing the love, peace, and salvation of Christ on this Christmas Day (Luke 2:14).

26 Ask God to increase the overflow of love and faithfulness in your life. “Write them on the tablet of your heart” and know that “you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.” Pray that as you reflect that love and faithfulness, others are drawn back to their first love of Jesus (Proverbs 3:3-4).

27 Pray that the faith of the Church is always “growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing.” Ask God for renewed urgency to love people by sharing the gospel and pointing to the return of Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

28 Pray for an awakening in the Church to the joy of Christ’s second coming — “the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.” Pray for the lost to also recognize the day of His coming (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

29 Pray for those who are fearful in chaotic times, that they will recognize “your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.” Pray that those with fearful hearts will be transformed into confident followers of Christ who welcome His coming (Isaiah 35:4).

30 Pray for the lost to awaken to the truth that “the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm.” Ask God to open their eyes to see that their hope is in Jesus who restores the broken, delivers from sin, redeems a lost world, and is coming again (Isaiah 40:10).

31 “Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let Earth receive her King!” Pray with all the saints throughout history this glorious hope: “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).