

Prepare Him Room



Sermon Text

Psalm 98



Big Idea

The words to *Joy to the World* were penned by Isaac Watts now 300 years ago. In the first verse of this carol we are encouraged to prepare room for Jesus in our hearts. Such a thing proves to be more difficult than we first imagine, but, when once we truly taste of His love and grace, it becomes the only fitting response.

As I read the words to the first verse of *Joy to the World*, something of a dissonance, a confusing tension, caught my eye and set me to wonder. Certainly, we must say that the great note struck there is one of joy, right? The Lord has come! The King is here! Joy has arrived for the world. Heaven and Nature are singing! And yet, in spite of all of this, you and I still need to be encouraged to prepare room for Him in our hearts . . . as if we would be a bit reluctant to do so. What is that?!

(1) Why Don't We Prepare Him Room?—The Deceptive Allure of Front Door Joys

It seems to me (and upon close reflection I assume you will agree with me) we all make room for the things that we think will bring us joy. If you'll grant me that this is true, then, when it comes to this question as to why we don't make room for Christ in our hearts, the answer is simply this: We don't think He will be the means of our joy. Our hearts are already attached to too many other things. We have crowded out the King, as it were. We are thinking we'll find joy in other places. We don't need Jesus. When I refer to joy that we try bring in through the front door I'm thinking of those things that seem easy, immediate, tangible, obvious—we look at them and think: "Yes! If I get that, clearly, I'll have joy." The world is full of these sorts of things. There's always knocking at the front door, so to speak. I don't know what it is for you, but I know there's something knocking on the door, threatening Jesus' place in your heart, even this Christmas season.

(2) Why Should We Prepare Him Room?—The Surprising Satisfaction of a Back Door Joy

Why does Jesus initially look so unimpressive? Why was He born in such a humble and lowly fashion? Why would the King who's come to make all things new and right enter the world in this way? Well, in a word: *grace*. If He is to rule and reign as our Lord and King, He must first offer up Himself as our sacrifice and substitute. If He is to remove the curse from us, He must first become a curse for us. If He is to make us eternally rich in God, He must for our sake become poor. If He is to lead us to true and lasting joy, He must first take upon Himself our sin and sorrow. He's not come at Christmas to impress us with the pomp and pageantry of His earthly life. He's come to save us by offering Himself up to death—death on a cross.

I suppose the most profound thing in all of this is that, though we've been talking about how important it is that we prepare Him room in our hearts, what we see is that, before we've ever been inclined to do such a thing He has already been preparing room for *us* in His. That is the meaning of the cross. That is the meaning of Christmas. God has come down to a people distracted, uninterested, wayward, rebellious, and He has made a way for us to get back home to Himself—the One we truly need and desire.

Reflection Questions



- What is your favorite Christmas Carol and why? Why do you think *Joy to the World* has been so beloved for so long? What about it ministers to you?
- What would you say is knocking at the front door of your heart these days? What are you tempted to find your joy in outside of Jesus? Why? What does it promise you? Does it ever really deliver? How will it let you down in the end?
- Why is it so important that Jesus comes in low and unimpressive? Why are we prone to overlook Him as the answer to all our longings? How did you first come to see and experience the great joy of the gospel?
- Have you prepared room for Jesus in your heart? What can you do to prepare more room for Him this Christmas season?