

Joy to the World!

-Jim Hyst-

“Joy to the world, the Lord is come!” Most of the Christian world today exults Jesus Christ with these words. Most see it as the step to their salvation, unequivocally a wonderful event, but miss that the Incarnation of God goes far beyond that. It is another step in completing the divine purpose in the Creation; namely, the glorification of God. *Joy to the World* is a wonderful hymn; upbeat, strong, and stirring. It has the power to stimulate the emotions, elate the heart, and create a refreshing experience that seems to reach into the soul. But that which we generally sense, is it truly joy? What is joy? Is it happiness? Is it a good feeling? Is it the excitement that seems ought to accompany a celebration? Is joy the good feeling that will be displayed after services this morning as we exit the building and wish each other a merry Christmas? What is it that we actually feel and what is it we are wishing to others? Looking at the Greek word χαίρω (chairō) which translates into joy did not provide a great insight for me. I had to interpret joy from a sense rising out of the total Christian message. For me joy is not happiness. Happiness is mostly a feeling. Joy might affect feelings, but it is more of a rock of certainty. Happiness is fleeting. Joy remains steadfast. Happiness evaporates under unpleasantness. Joy continues under distress. Happiness is fickle. Joy is faithful. Music can produce a feeling mistaken as joy if we ignore the words of the hymn or fail to focus on the source of our joy. As in the hymn, “Joy to the world,” joy is not our immediate happiness, but the Lord coming into the world. Jesus in the world is our joy. He is our steadfastness, our peace, our strength, and our hope. Jesus is the one who changes our heart so that we can rejoice. Jesus is the One that enables us to suffer for Him and still have peace. Jesus, our joy, maintains our focus through good times and enables us to press on in bad. Do not let the music of the Christmas hymns carry you away without taking true joy with you. Joy to the world is Jesus in the world! Joy is found in Christ. He in us and we in Him; that is our joy.