

ADVENT: JOY TO THE WORLD

Life Group Questions | Sunday, December 13, 2020

Do you have a memory of singing Joy to the World?

Read Psalm 98.

The 9 stanzas or verses in Psalm 98 can be broken down into three parts. There is a progression of joy:

- In verses 1-3 Israel is singing joyfully to God.
- In verses 4-6 all the earth is singing joyfully to the LORD. God's rule and reign is over all things.
- In verses 7-9 all of creation is joyful. The seas and the rivers and mountains are singing joyfully to the LORD.

How does this progression of joy impact you?

What is joy? What's the difference between joy and pleasure? As a group, try to work out a shared definition of joy. Is joy natural or challenging for you? How so?

Read Hebrews 12:1-3. Joy isn't an escape from our pain, but rather joy partners with our pain. How have you witnessed this paradox in your own life? Where do you ache for God's joy today?

Pray together. Close with the following prayer:

You came once for your people, O Lord, and you will come for us again. As we decorate and celebrate, we do so to mark the memory of your redemptive movement into our broken world, O God. Our glittering ornaments and Christmas trees, Our festive carols, our sumptuous feasts—By these small tokens we affirm. That something amazing has happened in time and space—that God, on a particular night, in a particular place, so many years ago, was born to us, an infant King, our Prince of Peace. Our wreaths and ribbons and colored lights, our giving of gifts, our parties with friends - these have never been ends in themselves. They are but small ways in which we repeat that sounding joy first proclaimed by angels in the skies near Bethlehem. In view of such great tidings of love announced to us, and to all people, how can we not be moved to praise and celebration in this Christmas season? As we decorate our tree, and as we feast and laugh and sing together, we are rehearsing our coming joy! We are making ready to receive the one who has already, with open arms, received us! We would prepare your room here in our hearts and here in our home, Lord Christ. Now we celebrate your first coming, Immanuel, even as we long for your return. O Prince of Peace, our elder brother, return soon. We miss you so! Amen.