

Two Texas Aggies went to Wisconsin one winter to do some ice fishing. After setting up their tent, they pulled the cord on their chain saw to cut a hole in the ice. Then they heard a mysterious voice from above saying, “There are no fish under the ice.” “Is that You, God?” they asked in awe. “No,” came the reply, “but I know that there are no fish under the ice. I’m the owner of this ice-skating rink.”

We may exhaust ourselves with all the parties, shopping, and family events. In our attempt to create a perfect Christmas experience, it’s easy to miss out on the experience of Christmas. We have to remember Christmas is all about God and what He has done for us in Jesus Christ. He is to be at the heart of our rejoicing at Christmas. If our focus isn’t on God, then our worship is just as futile as the Aggies’ attempt was at ice fishing.

As we continue to share the meaning of the hymn, *Joy to the World*, I want us to turn our thoughts to how we ought to rejoice in the birth of our Savior.

Let us sing together verse three in Joy to the World.

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.

As you know, the hymn, *Joy to the World*, was based on Psalm 98 entitled “The Messiah’s Coming and Kingdom.” But, verse three does not come from Psalm 98. Instead, with this verse, we are taken back to the time of the Garden of Eden to remember the story of the fall in Genesis 3.

God had forbidden to eat the fruit of the tree in the middle of the Garden, but the serpent tempted Eve to eat the fruit. Then she ate it, and she offered it to Adam, and Adam ate it too. Thus, the “sins and sorrows” first began in the World. Also, “the curse” in this verse of *Joy to the World* comes from Genesis 3:14-19. God says to the serpent, “Cursed are you among all animals,” and then God goes on to tell Adam and Eve the curse that sin has introduced to the World. There will be pain in childbirth. The World will no longer be filled with bountiful trees bearing easy fruit to eat, and human beings will have to toil with the earth for their food, as “thorns infest the ground,” in Watts’ words.

By Adam and Eve’s disobedience, sin came into the world. Sin caused separation between man and God. The curse that we speak of is all of the consequences of sin. We all feel the effects of the curse each day of our lives. Our bodies decay. People who we love die. There are famines to endure. We have to work for food and shelter. Having babies and raising kids is difficult and often filled with sorrow.

However, Watts wrote, no more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground. How can we reverse the curse of sin?

Paul said in Romans 5:12, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.” He continued to say, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous... so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Also, he said in 1 Corinthians 15:45, “Thus it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”

We have someone who would reverse the curse, Jesus Christ. He was the one responsible for changing the curse of the first Adam!

Rev. Johnny James preached a message “Second Beats First”

“The first Adam cursed us; the second Adam blessed us.

The first Adam hurt us; the second Adam healed us.

The first Adam put us out; the second Adam brought us in.

The first Adam put us down; the second Adam lifted us up.”

The truth is that Jesus reversed the curse. There is no reason for anyone to be living under a curse.

The message on Christmas is that God reversed the curse of sin through the second Adam, Jesus Christ, who born in Bethlehem. It is God’s will for the curse to be changed in our lives!

In 1990 a 32-year-old psychiatric patient rushed through the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam until he reached Rembrandt’s famous painting “Nightwatch.” Then he took out a Squirt Gun filled with acid and sprayed it all over the masterpiece before he could be stopped.

Then, what did officials do? Throw the painting out and forget about it? Absolutely not! Using the best experts, who worked with the utmost care and precision, they made every effort to restore the treasure.

God’s masterpiece was His creation. His crowning achievement was us. God created us in His image. By our own misguided actions, we have damaged God’s masterpiece and marred the beautiful image of Himself. But He was not content to throw us out, nor even to leave us damaged, but instead has chosen to reverse the effects of the curse that our sin has brought upon us. That is why we can sing,

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.

Let us sing verse 4, 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.

By the fourth verse, we are transported to that blessed time to come when all will be fulfilled! Jesus did not remain in that manger. He died on the cross, and then he didn't stay on the cross, either. He rose again, sits at the right hand of God the Father, and will soon come again to judge the living and the dead. That is why we confidently sing: "He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness."

We know that all the nations of the earth are ultimately subject to God's ever-sovereign hand. He is the one who gives authority, and He is the one who takes it away. He uses every mistake, every poor decision, every war, every calamity, and every season of prosperity, all for his glory.

But we have not yet seen the nations of this world intentionally seeking to prove the wonders and glories of our God. They often try to defame the name of God. But there will be a day when we can say, "He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness, And wonders of his love. And that day will be wonderful.

Joy to the World is all about the fulfillment of what Christ came to do in the first place, and the invitation to rejoice in the wonder of His love.

There was a six-year-old boy named Nicolas. His kindergarten class was part of a school's "Winter Pageant." His class, decked in red sweaters & snow caps, was to sing "Christmas Love." One by one, a child held up their respective letter. The first kid held up a "C" as the class sang "C is for Christmas." The song was going smoothly until they came to Nicolas. He had the letter "M", but didn't realize he was holding it upside down. The school kids giggled at mistake. The parents were embarrassed. Nicolas was oblivious to his mistake. By the time the class had finished holding up their letters, the giggling had stopped. What the audience saw before them was the sign that said: CHRIST WAS LOVE.

God is with us. God loves us. May the wonder of His love touch you this Christmas and bring you peace and happiness. Joy to the World, the Lord is come, rejoice in the wonder of His love.