



## TIME OF GRACE®

# Christmas Playlist: Joy to the World

## Study Notes

### Summary

What makes “Joy to the World” a must for every Christmas service even though—spoiler—its writer did not intend for it to be a Christmas song? It has the one thing we all deeply long for: lasting joy. That kind of eternal joy can only be found in one person. Pastor Mike finishes this series that digs into the meaning of our favorite classic Christmas carols.

- **Joy’s Struggle** – The People who \_\_\_\_\_ help you \_\_\_\_\_.  
The People who \_\_\_\_\_ help you \_\_\_\_\_.

- **Joy’s Secret** — Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ and Jesus \_\_\_\_\_.

- Verse 1 —

Joy to the world the Lord is come  
Let earth receive her King  
Let every heart prepare Him room  
And Heaven and nature sing

- Verse 2 —

Joy to the world the Savior reigns  
Let men their songs employ  
Let every heart prepare Him room  
And Heaven and nature sing

- **Luke 2:10-11**— But the Angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

- Verse 3 —

He rules the world with truth and grace  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness  
And wonders of His love

## Points to Ponder

1. Text someone who helped you in your faith during this past year. Thank them for being God’s gift to your spiritual growth.
2. Read Luke 2:1-10 sometime this Christmas as a reminder of the true reason for the season. Note every verse where you see the joy of knowing Jesus.
3. Do you know someone who stays away from church because of their unanswered questions? Invite them to watch Time of Grace!

## Homework for Next Week

Mark 8:34-35

Time of Grace Ministry  
“Joy to the World”  
Luke 2:10-11  
December 24, 2023

*Pastor Mike Novotny*

If I could ask you kind of a personal question this Christmas, how is your joy? If I would do a quick focus group with your family and friends and ask them about you, is she a joyful person? Is he the kind of guy who is full of joy? If your heart was a gallon jug, how far up would the joy get? And if I ask some of you that question, if we had time to pass the microphone around, I bet the answers would really depend on what kind of year it's been for you. It depends on what's going on with your body and your physical health. It depends what's going on with your bank account and your finances. It depends what's going on with your family and your friendships, your relationships. Whether you're dating, if you want to date. Whether you're getting married, if you want someone who will commit. Whether you're holding a baby in your arms this Christmas, if you want to expand your family. I bet you'd talk to me about work, you'd talk to me about life, you'd talk to me about a thousand different things and your joy would be dependent on those things. Which is the tricky thing about joy, right? You want it. I want it. We ache and crave for it, but joy is pretty tricky to get and then to hold on to.

And if you're taking notes in your program today, I want to explain to you why. If you're watching at home, grab a pen, write this down. I think one of the reasons that so many of us have so little joy is because the people who would help us get more joy, they can't. And the people who maybe could help us get more joy, they won't. Let me say that again. I think that you and I would have a lot more joy if it wasn't for this fact that the people who really would love to help us be happier and improve in life, they can't fix our problems. And maybe the people who could fix our problems, they don't have the passion or the desire, they won't. So, the people who would, can't. The people who could, won't.

Let me give you a few examples. Let's imagine you're on stress meds. You're stressed because of finances, right? You can't take the Christmas vacation, you can't buy the gifts that you want, you got credit card debt, you're struggling to pay the rent. Maybe you live in a nice home, but people just don't know the pressure of business, and payroll, and all the bills, and the braces, and the tuition. You would be happier, you would be trying to sleep in heavenly peace, but you toss and you turn because you're broke.

Well, I bet there are a whole bunch of people in your life who would love to fix that problem, but they can't. When you share your financial situation with your best friend over coffee and she wishes she could fix it, pull out a check book and write it six figures, but you can't. It breaks your mom's heart, but she's paying her own bills. You're not related to Elon Musk, so, yeah. They're people who love you, who would love to take that burden off your shoulders, but the fact is, they can't.

And there are people who could fix that problem, but they won't. I mean, Elon Musk could be waiting in your driveway when you get home after church today. He could just give you a blank check. Whatever you want, nine figures, who cares? But don't hold your breath. He won't. There are millionaires, there are billionaires who could give 1% of their wealth and end all your financial problems forever, but will they? Now, you see, the problem with joy, the people who would, can't, and the people who could, won't.

Alright, second example. Let's think about your family situation. You know, not everyone needs to date or get married or have children. Jesus didn't and that was cool. But lots of us, lots of us want that happy family and want to meet that someone, fall for them, want them to fall for us, we want to commit to them, they want to commit to us. We want to have two kids, maybe three. It's like those Christmas cards, do you get as many of these as I do? With the dad who's surprisingly handsome with the perfect hair and the wife at his side. They look so close and they have the kids. And the whole family is wearing these matching lumberjack jammies. Do you get these cards? It's so adorable. It's like the perfect family. And maybe you want that, and you don't have that. And the people who would love to help you get that, they can't.

Or your mom maybe wishes her son, or her daughter, would meet that special someone; but she can't control who falls for you or who commits to you. Your best friend maybe wishes you could have a baby like she did; but she has no control or authority over human fertility. They would, but they can't. And maybe the people who could, you know, the girl you really like at work, or the guy that you're dating, they could DM you during the Christmas service and bring joy to your world. He could propose this Christmas Eve. But you can't force people to love you.

And so, we try to find joy in the perfect relationship and family but would, could, can't, won't. Or maybe this year you did something honestly, that you really regret. Maybe you relapsed into an addiction, maybe just had a falling out with someone in your family. And you wish there was some, rewind button and your best friend does too. But she doesn't have a button like that, and you don't have an app like that on your phone. You can't go back and make better choices. You can't rewind and not say those things and sin. And I could give you ten more examples.

All of us in so many areas of life would love to live with joy in our world, but there's this human dilemma that all of us end up in. And the people who would help us, can't, and the people who could help us, won't. But what if -- here's my big question for tonight. What if there was someone who both could and would? What if there is someone you could meet this Christmas who could? Someone who had the resources and the connections, the power, the ability, the authority who could help you with your worst problems? And what if that same person wanted to help you, they cared about you, they won't ignore your calls, your emails, your requests. What if there was someone who was the perfect combination of power and love who had authority and concern? If it came with all the authority needed, and yet, all the compassion for you as a person, what if there was a person like that?

Well, Merry Christmas, everyone. I know a guy. I know a guy. His name is Jesus. And if you don't know much about Jesus, you're going to learn a lot about Jesus before I say amen. Tonight,

I have a singular goal and it is this, to prove to you that Jesus can, and Jesus will. That if you follow Jesus, if you trust in him -- write down these words that Jesus can. He is totally capable, absolutely powerful, omnipotent and authoritative. He is a King and a Lord. He is the very son of God. He can. And what makes the same Jesus so amazing is that he will. He wants to help you. He cares about you even if no one else in the world does. He loves like no one loves. He feels like no one else feels. He reaches out when no one else is reaching out.

Today, I want to preach to you the name of the Jesus who can and the Jesus who will. So, here's what I'm going to do, I'm going to go back to that classic song we all love to hear on Christmas, Joy to the World. I'm going to break down the three stanzas and I'm going to show you within that song, this message of incredible joy that you too could find in Jesus because he can, and he will.

So, let's jump into stanza one, verse one of the classic hymn, "Joy to the World," which says this, "Joy to the world! The Lord is come. Let earth receive her king. Let every heart prepare him room and heaven and nature sing." "Let every heart prepare Him room." You ever noticed the capital "H" on that word? Jesus wants to find room in your heart, every single heart. It doesn't matter how broken or bad you've been. Jesus wants to move in right here in your heart. But here's what you need to know. If Jesus comes in, he's going to take a lot of room, right? He's not some Google God you stick in your pockets and search for spiritual answers when you're in distress. He's not some on call counselor whose number you save and, "Hey, Jesus. I need your help." No. If Jesus is going to live into your heart, he's going to come with all of himself, with his bigness, his lordship, his kingship, and his authority.

The question you need to ask yourself at Christmas is, is there room in my heart for a Jesus who is that big? Kind of makes me think of the Jesuses who live in my house. A Couple years ago, my family and I found this on Amazon. This is a 12-inch stuffed version of Jesus, and he currently lives on my youngest daughter Maya's bed with, I think, like 47 other stuffed animals. Parents, do you have kids like this? And this little Jesus is so small. Like, we love him. A little smile on his face. But this Jesus is so small that we lose him all the time. Alright. He gets lost under the sheets. He gets lost under the pillows. Sometimes he slips behind the crack in the bed. Sometimes he's underneath a bunch of stuffed animals. He's Jesus, but he's so small. We sometimes lose him.

But a couple years after we bought this Jesus, we bought another Jesus. Let's just show him to you. I found this on Amazon too. We call this guy... Jumbo Jesus. Jumb -- I'm like six-one, six-two. This is a six-foot tall Jesus. We actually bring Jumbo Jesus on all our family vacations and road trips with us. He sits in the backseat. The best part is, whenever I'm in a big metropolitan city and kind of a sketchy parking spot, I always put Jesus shotgun and if anyone tries to break into my car, they have to steal it under the watchful eye of our Lord and Savior. In fact, most of the time I put a little Bible open on his lap, and he's pointing right to the passage that says, "You shall not steal."

So, Jesus brings us ton of joy. I'm, you know, I'm driving the minivan. I look in the rearview mirror and here's this big old smile and Jesus looking back at me. Here's what I've learned about

Jumbo Jesus. He takes up a lot of space. When you have to squeeze the wife, and two kids, and four suitcases, and the coolers, and the backpack, sometime there's not room for a Jesus this big. And we're planning a camping trip, so we got to bring the sleeping bags, and the sleeping pads, and the tents, and the portable stove. And I'm starting to think, "Is there going to be enough room for all the stuff we want and a Jesus of this size too?"

Anyone get where I'm going? The question all of us have to ask at Christmas is, "What size Jesus do we believe in?" Alright. Lots of us want a big Jesus who has might and power. He has the authority to, work out plans for our life, help us, forgive us, save us, get us to heaven. But the question is, if that kind of Jesus exists in your heart, he's not going to come in a small mini form, he's going to come with bigness and with power and authority.

So, I'm going to set this Jesus away because I actually need to ask you a really huge question. The song that we've been singing says, "Let every heart prepare," capital H, "Him room." And the question is, is there room in you for a Jesus of that size? A king who comes and give commands to how you should live. A Lord who will listen to your every word, but in the end, he always gets the last word because he's God. A Jesus, to be honest, who kind of smirks when we want to use the phrase, "My truth," because he is the truth. A Jesus who cares about what you're going through, but you're not going to out vote him or change him, instead, he will change you.

Is there room inside of your heart for a capital "J" Jesus? Alright, let me get specific and make it a little uncomfortable. If the real Jesus through his word looked at kind of the priorities in your schedule and in your life and told you that things needed to change, would there be room in you for a Jesus like that? If he looked at you and said, "Well, you claim to follow me, but how much time do you actually spend following me?" Would you listen to him or kick him out of your heart? If Jesus frankly said to some of you, "You're going to listen to my word once a year, Christmas and then not again and claim we're good?"

Do you have any relationship that works on one hour a year? And if he told you to change, would there be room in you for that? If Jesus wasn't listening to what the world says, but what the Word says and he wanted to talk to you about sexuality, and marriage, and relationships. And he said that, "This is good, and this is not." That, "This is of God, and this is not." Would you change what you think, what you believe, and how you behave as you bend the knee to an authoritative king?

Or, are you so used to the authoritative voice being yours? If a big Jesus would come to your next holiday party and tell you to love her, even despite the things that she said. To forgive him, for the thing he did years ago. Would you listen to him? Would you try or would you go on doing your own thing, living your own life, abiding by your own truth? You know, this is always the question that Christianity has asked, if you want Jesus you can have him, but there is no miniature version of Jesus. There is just Lord, and King, Savior and God.

My fear for too many people today is that their hearts are just like that inn in Bethlehem. There's just no room. And so, today you just like me, we're going to have to decide, "Will every heart prepare him room?" Will we shrink Jesus down to some size that we can control so we feel

spiritual even though we're being or own gods? Or will we repent? Will we change? Will we confess to him and follow his name? Now, before you answer that question, I need to share what verse two of this classic song says. You know, maybe at this point you're thinking, "This doesn't sound very joyful. Jesus telling me what to do. Jesus telling me how to live. Jesus saying, I can't do that anymore. Jesus trying to change me. That doesn't sound like joy to my world." If that's what you're thinking, listen to what verse 2 says. "Joy to the world the savior reigns. Let men their songs employ. While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy. Repeat the sounding joy. Repeat, repeat the sounding joy."

The joy of Christianity is in the fact that the one who has all the power, and all the authority is so loving and compassionate that he came to save. He could have just chilled on the couch in heaven scrolling TikTok, watching Hallmark movies, staying comfortable. He did not. Instead, he came down giving up everything that was rightly his, to rescue you, to save you, to take everything you regret, everything you've done wrong, everything you can't rewind and undo. Jesus wanted to highlight all of it and push delete. That's why he came. That's why the angels on the day that Jesus was born said this, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." See if you can catch it. "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord."

You know, when I think of this kind of Jesus power, love, Lord and Savior, I obviously think of iconic Mexican actor, Danny Trejo. Recognize that guy? He's been in, like, a hundred and eighty-six thousand movies. He's always just really tough, beefy bad guy that you don't want to mess with, or meet in a dark alley. I recently read Danny Trejo's biography and in it his friend, Donal, D-O-N-A-L; Donal tells an amazing story about Danny's power and his love. It turns out the two were shooting a scene on the old movie, "Reindeer games." It might sound familiar to some of you. And the director on the set was incredibly stressed. Daylight was fading, they had one last chance to get the shot right. In this particular shot, Danny and Donal were climbing the snow-covered ladder. The set people kind of put freshly fallen snow on it, like no one had to climb it. They're running away from the bad guys, I think. They got one last shot, everyone knows, "If we mess this up, the sun's going to set. We'll be done for the day. The director was already ticked, he's going to snap. It's going to be a terrible thing."

So, they're getting ready. Seconds away from the shot when Donal slips. Loses his grip on the snowy ladder and starts to fall. And if he does, he's done. Early in his career, the director would have blackballed him. He would have been done. He was falling with no way to catch himself, but that's when Danny saved him with one mighty Mexican arm. Donal says Danny Trejo reached out and grabbed him by the scuff of the coat, hanging on to the snow-covered ladder with the other. With one arm he holds up his two-hundred-pound friend. Two hundred pounds with one arm. The director doesn't see a thing. Danny Trejo is holding his friend in midair and before the director can see he sets him back on the ladder, leans over and whispers, "I got you."

Action. All the power and so much love. And that's why I love Jesus. He has so much power. He can take the hardest parts of this year and he can turn them for good. He can take your struggles with mental health, the death in your family, the divorce that you've been through, the pain in your body. And he has so much authority, he can actually work out human history to work it for

good. Or when you slipped and you fell this year, when you did something morally, said something you can't take back that you know is not good, and it wasn't of God. You can't catch yourself from sin, so Jesus reaches out. And with all of his power, he grabs you before you plunge into hell. He sets you back into the family of God and he whispers, "I got you."

Christians love to obey Jesus. We love to submit to Jesus. We love to follow Jesus as challenging as that might be because when we slip, Jesus uses his power and his love to catch us. And I want to tell you this today, that same Jesus is coming back soon, and he is going to use that same power and love to fix everything.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus came with power and love to save you from your sin. And sometime very soon and maybe before this year is over, he is going to return to end everything wrong with life. That's actually what "Joy to the world" is about. Can I kind of crash your Christmas party? Did any of you here know "Joy to the world" is not a Christmas song? Issac Watts, the original author was writing a song based on Psalm 98. And Psalm 98 is not about cows in mangers and a virgin giving birth. It's about the return of the King of kings and Lord of lords who comes with power and love to restore the universe so heaven and nature sing. The rocks, the hills, the plains and all of mankind who knows and follows him burst in joy because death is over, and pain is over, and loneliness is over, and depression is over, the struggle is over, anxiety is over, back pain is over, migraines are over. Our Jesus with power, strength and love, he came once. He is coming again to make everything new.

And so, I want to tell you today, he is not just the lord, he is the Lord of love. That's why verse 3 of this classic song puts it all together. I'll go quickly. It says, "He," that's Jesus, "Rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love." You catch it? He rules with truth. He's King and Lord. But he rules with truth and grace. Undeserved love, forgiveness of sins given at the cross.

And that's why people around the world and many nations who are gathered in this room right now are proving that he is worth it. We're singing the glories of his righteousness, how wonderful is the love of Jesus. So, I can think in this room right now are people from America, from Mexico, from Bangkok, from Brazil, from Italy, from Vietnam. And it's not just us this weekend. Think of this, billions of people with a B, billions of people will likely sing these same songs lifting up this same name because there is only one name among all the nations who has so much power and so much love to save you from everything wrong.

Jesus is the secret to, "Joy to the world." Because Jesus and only Jesus brings eternal joy to your world. Let's pray.

Our dear Jesus, you are the King of all kings. And so, we don't have to be afraid of anything. You're sovereign and authoritative, and powerful over our bodies, over governments, over countries, over years, over millennia. There's nothing that escapes your notice and there's nothing that is not under your control.



Whenever we worry, God, you are not worried. Whenever we feel anxious, you're never anxious. You're absolutely in control. And if you are a God who can do that much, we never have to be afraid. And if you're a God who loves us when we don't deserve to be loved, if you're a God who didn't stay way up in heaven, but came down to the bottom to find sinners like us, we can know who we are, your children, and we can know where we're going, to spend forever with you.

So, I pray, God, that everyone who is here today would have hearts that are filled with joy, hearts that have room for Jesus, hearts that are ready to sing, "Joy to the world," because the Lord who is also the Savior has come. It's in his glory saying that we pray all of these things. And all of God's people join their voices, and they say, "Amen."