

## *Living Joyfully*

Psalm 98 (May 9, 2021)

### *Psalm 98*

<sup>1</sup>O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory. <sup>2</sup>The Lord has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations. <sup>3</sup>He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

<sup>4</sup>Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises. <sup>5</sup>Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody. <sup>6</sup>With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord. <sup>7</sup>Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it. <sup>8</sup>Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy <sup>9</sup>at the presence of the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

### *Historical Context*

Psalm 98 is the fifth psalm in a group of six psalms in Book Four of the Psalter known as the Enthronement Psalms (Psalms 93, 95-99). The Enthronement Psalms celebrate the reign of God as sovereign or king over all humanity and, indeed, over all creation. In their opening words, they cry out to all who will hear, “O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!” (95:1); “O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth” (96:1); “The LORD is king! Let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!” (97:1).

### *Theme: Living Joyfully*

Psalm 98 commends a counter-intuitive piece of advice: don't take the bait of fear and pessimism. However accurate our modern cultural diagnosis of doom and gloom might be, however low the sociological trends and opinion polls sink, do not yield to the spirit of despair. Instead, choose the most radical of all options today—the subversive act of genuine joy.

The sicknesses of our world can easily provoke fear and insecurity, but the psalmist encourages us to resist those temptations. He invites each person, every nation, “all the ends of the earth,” and the entire cosmos to know the joy of being known and loved by God.

Psalm 98's invitation to joy is based upon what God has done and will do. He has done marvelous things. He has extended salvation far beyond Israel to “the ends of the earth.” In a world plagued with pandemics and preventable suffering, perhaps nothing is more radical or counter-cultural than to live with joy and confidence. But living joyfully because of God's lavish love, said the mystic Juliana of Norwich (14th century), is the greatest honor that we can give Almighty God.

But, how does/can the judgment and righteous and equity of God play itself out? Those who embrace this message — roaring, clapping, singing together — are the hands, the feet, the voices of judgment, righteousness, and equity in this world. May we embrace our task, and may we enable, to the best of our individual abilities, all of creation to undertake the task.