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Joy to the World!

By Pastor Christopher Seah

The New Year has begun. The engines of life have fired up. The glories of Christmas are a fading memory. We are all back on the assembly line of national productivity. But a line from a familiar hymn would do our souls good.

Joy to the world, the Lord is come: let earth receive her King.

The hymn calls us to rejoice and be glad, because the Lord God has come. And God has brought with him a gift—*himself*, in the person of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Of course, not many would consider a king a gift, at least not one that is highly sought after. We are all liberal democrats now. Give us MPs and ministers who would do our bidding. But a king? And an all-sovereign one at that? Who would want such a gift in this day and age?

The King who has come is a great blessing for a number of reasons. For one, *he is himself the Lord of Life*. He is the One whose rule brings life eternal and joy everlasting. As finite beings, creatures made with limits to knowledge and strength, it is simply not true that we are capable of ruling ourselves completely. And as sinful beings, creatures who are corrupted in heart and mind, our natural inclination is to turn from God to death, from wholeness to dissolution. If it were not for earthly laws put in place by earthly governments, we will drag our society to the ground. And yet, earthly governments can only do so much, given that they are finite and sinful also. The only King who can give us unerring wisdom and abundant life is Jesus Christ. He is the Creator, the Life-Giver. Therefore, his law is life (Rom 8:2), and not a burden (Mt 11:30). Knowing him is the essence and purpose of eternal life (Jn 17:3). Thus, the King who comes does not come to oppress. He comes to enliven, and to enrich. His rule is necessary for human joy and vitality. We are dignified and fulfilled only under his rule.

Second, *the King who comes is the protector and shield of his people* (2 Sam 22:31). Since ancient times, the ruler is expected to protect his people. Our Lord Jesus has come to do just that. Our enemies are the evil cosmic powers who rule the present world (Eph 6:12). They are the true powers behind the evil in all human cultures. Christ our King protects us from the powers by shielding us from their demoralizing accusations; helping us discern and resist their destructive lies, and protecting us from those who serve them. The Psalmist proclaims: “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take

refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (Ps 18:2). Christ Jesus is the refuge and keeper of all who seek refuge in his fortress. Those who run to him will never be ashamed (Ps 25:3).

Third, *the King who comes is the representative of his people*. He carries the destiny of his precious ones in himself. Because he lives, they too will live forever. In Daniel 7, the prophet sees the Son of Man approach the heavenly throne. He is “given dominion and glory and a kingdom” (7:14). A few verses later, we read: “the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever” (7:18). How do we reconcile these two truths? The Son of Man represents the saints of God. They receive the kingdom in and through him. Ultimately, there are no losers in the Kingdom. King Jesus has secured our victory in life. No failure in your life is greater than the victory of your Savior.

Will you rejoice in your King this year? Will you learn the discipline of God-centered, Christ-dependent rejoicing? God intends for the joy of the Gospel to always rule our hearts; not just during the Christmas season, and certainly not only when we feel good about everything. “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice” (Phil 4:4). May God make us to know “what is the breadth and length and height and depth” of the glory of our King and his great heart for us (Eph 3:18, 19).