

The First Congregational Church



A note from Pastor Jay

SUNDAY SERMON: PSALM 98 AND "JOY TO THE WORLD"

Yes, Sunday worship may seem disorienting as we sing "Joy to the World" and have some Christmas decorations up for the radio play after worship. Have we gone the way of the retail industry in bringing us Christmas too soon? You might think so, but the text for Sunday is Psalm 98, and Isaac Watts used it as inspiration for his now beloved Christmas carol. But he meant his carol not for Christmas but for the second advent, when Christ "rules the world with truth and grace." Psalm 98 calls for all of creation to join together in praise of God, for God is coming to bring justice and equity. We will join that chorus on Sunday.

"In a world that assumes the status quo, that things have to be the way they are and that we must not assume too much about improving them, the doxologies of God's people are fundamental indicators that wonders have not ceased, that possibilities not yet dreamt of will happen, and that hope is an authentic stance." (Patrick D. Miller, Jr.). Miller goes on to suggest that thanksgiving and praise are subversive practices, going against the grain of selfishness and autonomy: "Doxology is profoundly subversive, undercutting all human structures and every human being as pretenders for ultimacy or absolute devotion. That happens first of all with regard to the possible pretensions that we make for our own selves. Praise places us totally outside ourselves. Thanksgiving, whether to other persons or God, is an inherent reminder that we are not autonomous and self-sufficient, and by its very character directs our positive feelings toward others rather than toward ourselves."



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