

True Joy of Christmas

Consider the situation of this young man. He was often sick as a baby. He was always small – puny, some would say.

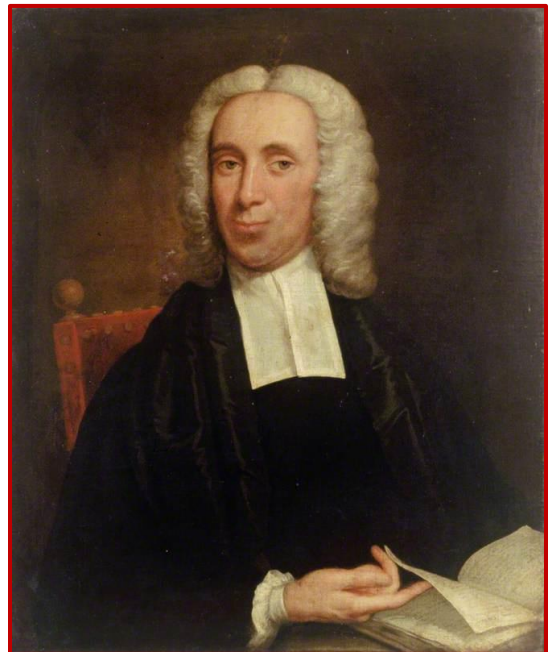
As a youth, he was always frail and delicate. He was not able to play sports with the other boys his age. Eventually, he entered the ministry, and was called as pastor of Mark Lane Congregational Chapel in Southampton, London, where he helped train preachers. But his health was so fragile that he was unable to serve his growing congregation.

Amazingly, he did not dwell on his troubles. In fact, his spirit soared. His only real complaint was the poor quality of the hymns of his day. He felt they did not convey hope and joy.

Someone challenged him to write better ones. He did, and he wrote more than 750 hymns, most of them being songs of praise.

When his health collapsed completely in 1748, he left one of the most remarkable collections of hymns the world has ever known. His name? Isaac Watts.

Watts is recognized as the *Godfather of English Hymnody*, and many of his works remain in use today and have been translated into numerous languages.



Isaac Watts discovered joy in his life because he knew that God would never desert him. He was able to live his life with all sorts of health problems, feeling close to God and Jesus.

As we enter the Christmas season, we will hear and sing one of Watts' most famous hymns, *Joy to the World*. Despite his physical ailments, the joy in his heart is reflected in the lyrics to that song:

Joy to the World

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.*

(more)

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

The lyrics of this song suggest that Isaac Watts could hardly contain himself when thinking about the grace, the mercy, and the love of Jesus Christ.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us be inspired afresh by the passion of Isaac Watts. And you can find the true joy about which he wrote by surrendering your life to Christ.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16 NKJV).

That's the source of joy – and eternal hope!

– Beecher Hunter