



Sing to the Lord!

Psalm 96

Introduction - Welcome to worship.

I'm Jane Edwards, one of the local preachers who usually worships at Sherwood, and together we'll explore the theme of singing, and how this helps us to praise, share and experience God's presence. Wherever and whenever you're using this material be aware that you're sharing together with others who are also worshipping at different times and in different locations across Nottingham North East Circuit. I'd really encourage you to join in the songs in this worship, so you might want to find a space where you can sing out loud without worrying about distracting others!

We begin with a song of praise that helps us to connect with that time of worship together; Come now is the time to worship.

Come now is the time to worship
Come now is the time to give your heart
Come just as you are to worship
Come just as you are before your God
Come

Come now is the time to worship
Come now is the time to give your heart
Come just as you are to worship
Come just as you are before your God
Come

One day every tongue
Will confess You are God
One day every knee will bow
Still the greatest treasure remains
For those who gladly choose You now

Brian Doerksen, Vinyard Songs UK

Let's pray.

We come to sing to you, Lord,
to make a joyful noise to you, our rock of salvation.
We come thankfully into your presence,
and our songs of praise will be joyful and noisy.
For you are our God and a great King,
a king above all else we think important.
You hold the deepest caves on the earth in one hand
and the highest mountains at the same time.
You made the sea and it is yours,
and your hands shaped the dry land.

And so we come together to worship you and bow down,
we kneel before you, our maker.
You are our God, and we live on your land,
we are your sheep, made by your mighty hand.
And as we worship you, as we make that joyful noise,
help us, today, to listen to your voice.

Amen.

(Taken from Roots resources)

And we share together in the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be your Name,
Your kingdom come
Your will be done
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are
yours
Now and forever
Amen

Have you ever thought much about singing, and what happens when we sing? Whether you're in a choir, or simply in the shower, singing is a physical activity, and uses different parts of our bodies. Sing a few notes to yourself now and think about the different bits of you that are involved in making the sound. Your nose, lungs and diaphragm work together to control the air flow. Your shoulders, tummy and sometimes your bottom give you stability. Your throat muscles move to make air pass over your vocal chords. Your mouth, lips and tongue shape the air flow to create tones and words. When we sing in worship we are using our whole physical selves in worshipping God; but not just our physical bodies. We bring our brains, our emotions, our memories. Many of you will know about dementia choirs and how singing can help mental health. It helps us to express ourselves and have a positive experience. The act of singing makes connections and strengthens neural pathways. We think about the words that we're singing and connect with the music through our emotions. It involves all of who we are. So let's bring it all of our selves in worship with another song. Be thou my vision.

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart
All else but naught to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best thought, in the day and the
night
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light

Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word
Be thou ever with me and Thou with me, Lord
Thou my great Father, thy child let me be
Be thou in me dwelling and I one with Thee

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the
fight
Be thou my whole armour, be thou my true
might
Be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong
tower
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of
my power

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise
Be thou my inheritance, now and always
Be thou and thou only the first in my heart
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright
Son
O grant me it's joys after victory is won
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all

Psalm 96 (NRSV)

Praise to God Who Comes in Judgement
O sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations,

his marvelous works among all the peoples.
For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.
Honour and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.
Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts.
Worship the Lord in holy splendour;
tremble before him, all the earth.
Say among the nations, 'The Lord is king!
The world is firmly established;
it shall never be moved.
He will judge the peoples with equity. '
Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
let the field exult, and everything in it.
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy
before the Lord; for he is coming,
for he is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with his truth.

It was almost thirty years ago now when it first happened. I was a student in Coventry. As with many young people when they leave home and move to another city I felt a bit lost and empty. I happened to be living right opposite the Cathedral – that great modernist building with the stunning tapestry and etched windows. In my first few weeks as a student I'd linked up with the local Methodist Minister, and as she'd picked up that I could hold a tune she had asked if I would help her lead the singing in a service in one of the side chapels of the Cathedral. And so I found myself in a circle with a small group of fellow Christians, ready to start the hymn. And so I took a deep breath. And as I breathed in I sensed something I'd never experienced before. In that moment it felt like I was breathing in God, that the Holy Spirit was in me, filling my lungs. And I opened my mouth, and out came a note; strong and pure. I could feel God in my voice, and I felt connected to the people around me, and to the place. It felt that God was making music through me.

I can't say that I have the same experience all the time, but singing for me is a very real spiritual experience. George Herbert described prayer as 'God's breath in man returning to its birth' and that's pretty much how I feel about singing. When I read the words of the Psalm, that's what resonates with me.

'Sing to the Lord a new Song 'says the Psalmist,. Singing has a purpose; we are singing to God. 'Sing to the Lord all the earth'; singing also connects people at a very instinctive level. When we sing together as a congregation we get that glimpse of what it means to be part of the commandment to the whole earth to sing to the Lord, as the music goes in us and through us and

around us and between us until we are one body the church. Making music together as Christians is a real gift. Remember that as **you** sing today you're joining in with others in the circuit and beyond - albeit virtually!

And this Psalm goes further; it puts our singing into the context of God's greater creation. It is not only people that make music. Singing was there right at the beginning, and it will go on until the very end. Before the world began, one Word was there. Elsewhere in the Old Testament Job talks about how at creation the morning stars sang together in praise. In this Psalm the writer talks about how when God's Kingdom is here the heaven's will rejoice, the sea resound, the fields will be jubilant and the trees will sing. When we sing our voices are only part of the music. We're joining with something that has been going on since the dawn of time, and will be going on long after we've gone. We are part of God's creation and what a blessing that is.

So let's sing again! Majesty.

Majesty, worship His majesty
Unto Jesus be all glory, honor and praise,
Majesty, kingdom authority
Flow from His throne, unto His own
His Anthem raise

Majesty, worship His majesty
Unto Jesus be all glory, honor and praise,
Majesty, kingdom authority
Flow from His throne, unto His own
His Anthem raise

So exalt, lift up on high, the name of Jesus
Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus the King
Majesty, worship His majesty
Jesus who died, now glorified
King of all kings

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Singing is a very natural human activity. We all do it, whether that's singing in the shower or singing along to the radio. It's also very personal and it's something that marks different aspects of our lives. When we share a song with another person we're sharing a part of us. Our family has lots of ways that we do this, and I'm sure yours will too. When we go to the football we sing to show our allegiance. When we go on a car journey we play a music compilation that shares our favourite songs. Growing up, whenever my Mum drove into a car park she would sing at the top of her voice 'Pay and Display for there's no other way'. I have fond memories of helping my Dad wash up whilst he crooned Nat King Cole 'When I fall in love'. Those of a certain age will remember making mix tapes for your girlfriend or boyfriend. When we share a song we share something very personal.

And of course life is not all running through the meadows singing 'The Hills are Alive'. Life is hard, and frustrating, and disappointing and a struggle. And we sing at those times too. When my Mum lay dying in hospital, crippled with dementia and utterly distressed she was constantly crying out in pain and confusion. My instinctive response was to sing to her. And the songs that came naturally were hymns; 'Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine'. I sang to comfort her and I sang to comfort myself and I sang to somehow include God in that situation too.

This is what Christians have done throughout the ages. We don't just sing because we are happy, we sing because we recognise that life is hard and fragile, and that our songs to God connect us with something bigger than us. We sing because we are sad. We sing because we are angry. We sing because we are lonely, or frustrated, or victimised, or oppressed. We sing because we are standing shoulder to shoulder with those around the world who are suffering. We sing to protest, and we sing out of despair. We sing because it's the only thing we can cling to in an uncertain

world. It's easy to fall into the trap that singing in church is just about praising God, and being upbeat and positive. It isn't, and if we pretend that life is all great in our songs then we're fooling ourselves and alienating others. As a church we need to make sure that we have space for songs that express difficult times as well.

So let's sing together again.

When the music fades
All is stripped away
And I simply come
Longing just to bring
Something that's of worth
That will bless Your heart

King of endless worth
No one could express
How much You deserve
Though I'm weak and poor
All I have is Yours
Every single breath

I'll bring You more than a song
For a song in itself
Is not what You have required
You search much deeper within
Through the way things appear
You're looking into my heart

I'll bring You more than a song
For a song in itself
Is not what You have required
You search much deeper within
Through the way things appear
You're looking into my heart

I'm coming back to the heart of worship
And it's all about You,
It's all about You, Jesus
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it
When it's all about You,
It's all about You, Jesus

I'm coming back to the heart of worship
And it's all about You,
It's all about You, Jesus
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it
And it's all about You,
It's all about You, Jesus

I'm coming back to the heart of worship,
And it's all about You,
It's all about You, Jesus
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it
And it's all about You,
It's all about You, Jesus

Matt Redman, Thankyou Music

Prayer of Intercession

Creator God,
your world is full of beauty – but also full of pain.
Today we pray for all those suffering –
in body, in mind and in spirit. We think particularly of those in Indonesia....
We ask for strength and for healing,
relief from pain, and the support of others.

We pray for all those who are ill,
whether suffering from a nasty short-term bug,
or a chronic long-term illness that drains not just energy but hope.
May we not forget them but continue to lift them before you,
and value them in how we respect and care for them.

We pray for those who are facing terminal illness –
either in themselves or in those they love.
We ask for your tender care to surround them,
for a knowledge of your presence with them
to sustain and strengthen them.

We pray in hope and faith,
knowing your compassion is so much greater than our own,
and that we cannot even begin
to measure the depths of your love for all those who suffer.
May your mercy rain down upon them,
your love be born afresh in their hearts,
and your healing be evident in their lives.
In the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Loving God, we pray for those
who act in your name in the work of healing:
Give them power, strength and gentleness.
in the work of teaching...
in the work of sharing...
in the work of peacemaking...

Amen.

Our final song is a great hymn of praise. Belt it out and enjoy!

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father
There is no shadow of turning with Thee
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they
fail not
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be

*Great is Thy faithfulness
Great is Thy faithfulness
Morning by morning new mercies I see
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me*

Summer and winter and springtime and
harvest
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love
Great is Thy faithfulness ...

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to
guide
Strength for today and bright hope for
tomorrow
Blessings all mine with 10, 000 beside
Great is Thy faithfulness ...

Thomas O Chisholm

Blessing

Go in the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to live for the Kingdom. Amen