

a new song

Psalm 98

May 13, 2018

Why should we sing?

Because the Lord has done wonderful things.

Why should we sing a new song?

Because the Lord is doing wonderful things! We sing not only of what the Lord has done, but of what the Lord is doing, not only of the past, but of the present, not of somebody else's experience, but our own. It's a new song, not because it is different or novel, but because it is our own.

What kind of song is it?

It's a song of joy, an exuberant song of joy: singing and shouting and clapping and roaring ... voices and harps and trumpets and horns. What a clamor! What a song! What joy!

And who is singing?

All the earth. All of creation. The sea is singing along with every creature that swims in it. The earth is singing along with every creature that walks or crawls or slithers upon it or flies over it. The rivers are clapping and the hills are singing. All of it, all of creation, is singing with joy to the Lord. Because the Lord is coming. Because the Lord is coming here. Because the Lord is coming here to rule. Because the Lord is coming here to rule with justice. What joy!

Why should you sing? Why should you sing?

Well, do you want to just sit there close-mouthed while the rest of creation is singing and shouting and clapping around you? Do you want to miss out on the party? Do you want to miss out on the joy?

But seriously, why should you sing?

Because you have something to sing about. The Lord has done wonderful things ... for you. Your song is the expression of your gratitude. Your song is the expression of your praise. It is the gift, the offering, you make of yourself in thanks to God.

Because you don't sing just with your voice. You don't sing just out of your head. You sing with your whole body, brain and vocal cords and lungs and diaphragm and posture. You sing with thought and with emotion and with desire. When you sing, you let go, you let out, you let yourself go, you let yourself out. When you sing, you make a literal offering of yourself.

You should sing because it is the offering, the gift, God deserves from you. But there is another reason, too, you should sing. You should sing because singing is the gift God gives you.

Where do you suppose music comes from? It is so innate to us, and not just to us, but to all creatures, to all creation: whales and dolphins, thrushes and gulls, beetles and crickets, wolves and coyotes, wind and sea and rivers and even the sounds heard by radio telescope from deep space. Anthropologists believe music is older than language. Music is woven into the fabric of creation, from the beginning. So where do you suppose music comes from? It must come from God, mustn't it? Do you suppose God is musical?

This is why you should sing, because the song does not merely express what you already know and already feel. The song itself is creative. It connects you to something and to someone beyond yourself. The song creates something new in you: new thoughts, new feelings, a new experience of the living presence of God.

I love to sing because of what singing allows me to do, to express, but also because of what singing, what music, does in me. I have been brought to tears, many times, by music, not just because I like it or find it especially beautiful, but because it bears God, because it brings God here, to me, to us.

So sing! By all means, sing! For the love of God, sing! Don't just sit there, close-mouthed, while the rest of creation is singing and shouting and clapping. Sing!