

I will sing to the Lord

Psalm 104:24-34

May 31, 2009

Where do you sing? There aren't many places we do sing, are there?

Do you sing in the shower? I don't sing in the shower and I can't say I have ever heard anybody else sing in the shower! But, then, I don't make a practice of listening in on people taking showers!

Maybe you sing at karaoke bars or while you're driving the car. I must say I have seen more than a few folks rockin' out behind the wheel!

Where do you sing with other people? Where do we sing together?

Maybe you sing Christmas carols at home with your family or with a group of carolers at a nursing home or with the rest of the audience at a Christmas concert. Maybe you sing the national anthem at a Panther football game.

Or maybe you sing as part of a choir, the Les Hale Singers or the Metropolitan Chorale or the Proud Image Chorus. But that doesn't really count, because that's "organized" singing, "rehearsed" singing, singing for the sake of performance.

There aren't many places at all we do sing with other people, just for the sake of singing, just because we have something to sing about. Maybe you don't sing anywhere. Maybe you don't sing at all. How sad! How very sad! And don't tell me you can't sing, because you can! Anybody can sing!

One place many of us do sing on a regular basis, the one place in our culture where people do sing together on a regular basis is here, in the church. Singing, music, is an essential part of our worship, of worship anywhere, in any kind of church. And it is right that it is.

It is right that we sing together here because music comes from God! Now there's no verse in the Bible that says, "and then God made music," but we don't need anybody to tell us that God made music, do we?

God has filled the universe with music! Listen to the song of the wood thrush and the song of the loon. Listen to the song of the dolphin and the song of the whale. Listen to the song of the bullfrog and the song of the cricket.

Even inanimate things make music. Doesn't the wind make music, howling and whistling and whining and singing? And what about rain, the varied rhythms and sounds of rain striking a metal roof or plunking into the surface water of a lake? And what about God's percussion section, thunder and lightning?

It is right that we sing here because music comes from God, but also because music allows us to say what we really cannot say in any other way. People have been making music since, well, as long as there have been people! -- making music to tell their stories and to celebrate the meaningful events of their lives and to cry out to God, making music to cry out to God with songs of grief and with songs of joy.

Music is one of the primary ways we speak our prayers and our praise to God, and music is one of the most powerful ways God speaks to us. Sometimes words alone are not enough. Sometimes words alone don't quite do justice to the depths and heights of what we feel. Sometimes words simply cannot say what we have to say. Sometimes you just have to sing!

And we have so much to sing about!

We sing about the wonder and beauty of all God has made ...

*Lord, you have made so many things!
How wisely you made them all!*

When we open our eyes to see, when we pay attention to the awesome grandeur of a mountain ridge or the exquisite detail of the petals of a single flower or the complexity and efficiency and diversity of creatures beyond our counting and beyond our naming or the brilliant light of the sun emerging at the horizon, we have to open our mouths to sing!

*When morning gilds the skies, my heart awaking cries,
may Jesus Christ be praised!*

For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies ...

*All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing, alleluia!*

We sing songs of thanksgiving to the One on whom we depend, moment by moment by moment, the One on whom all creatures depend ...

*All of them depend on you
to give them food when they need it.
You give it to them, and they eat it;
you provide food, and they are satisfied.
When you turn away, they are afraid;
when you take away your breath, they die
and go back to the dust from which they came.*

Our songs remind us that life is a gift, not something we give to ourselves or hold on to by our own power. We live by the mercy and grace of God. God feeds our bodies and our souls. God heals our wounds and forgives our sins. God calls us together and breaks down the walls that divide us. God calls us to him and crosses himself the uncrossed valley that lies between us and him.

*Great is your faithfulness, O God my Father,
with you no shadow of turning we see ...*

Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices ...

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound ...

We sing with gratitude and with eager desire for the breath that fill us and moves us and soothes us and empowers us ...

... the breath, the Spirit, that moved over the waters at the dawn of creation and brought a world to life;

... the breath, the Spirit, that moved over the heads of Jesus' gathered disciples at the dawn of this age and brought a church to life;

... the breath, the Spirit, who speaks the truth to our hearts and urges us to live it and proclaim it;

... the breath, the Spirit, who gives dreams of what can be, visions of what will be, to all of us, old and young alike, to me and to you!

*When you give them breath, they are created;
you give new life to the earth.*

*Breathe on me, breath of God,
fill me with life anew ...*

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me ...

Every time I feel the Spirit moving in my heart, I will pray ...

We sing because we are glad ...

I sing because I am glad, because the Lord has made me glad ...

... glad for my life;

... glad for the mother and father who raised me and gave me such a rich childhood and taught me to believe;

... glad for my wife who loved me and loves me still, who gives herself tirelessly and unselfishly to make better the lives of all those she loves;

... glad for my children who have made my life so much less settled and so much more full, who have stretched me and surprised me and made me proud;

... glad for my grandchildren, well, just glad for my grandchildren!

... glad for you, for the ways you show me what love looks like in action, and for the ways you allow me and encourage me to use my gifts for ministry to serve you and to bring honor to our God;

... glad for Christ Jesus, the one who saved me, and who is saving me still, the one who shows me the way and calls me to follow and patiently waits for me to come along, the one who astonishes me with his wisdom and astounds me with his grace, the one who gives me a clear vision of what is good and precious and delightful in this world as it is and as it will be!

Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice!

Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love ...

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

That's what we come here to do -- that's what we come to church to do -- to sing, to sing glad songs, to remember and celebrate the goodness of the life we are privileged to enjoy, and to remember and celebrate the goodness of the One who gives it.

We come to sing of the wonder and beauty of all God has made. We come to sing of the faithfulness of the God on whom all things, and we, depend. We come to sing of the power of the God who breathes new life into being, the God who breathes new life into us.

We come to sing glad songs ...

I will sing to the Lord all my life;

as long as I live I will sing praises to my God.

May the Lord be pleased with my song,

for my gladness comes from the Lord.