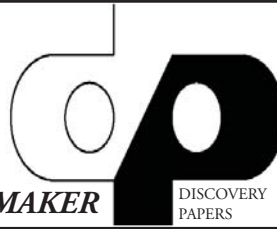


SINGING A NEW SONG

SERIES: LET US KNEEL BEFORE THE LORD, OUR MAKER



Catalog No. 5335
Psalm 96-100
6th Message
Steve Zeisler
December 14, 2008

The “Hallelujah Chorus” (Handel’s Messiah) is probably the most breathtaking oratorio that’s ever been composed. It has a theme that is unmistakable—The Lord God omnipotent reigns, King of kings, forever. The Christmas carol, “Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn King” (Charles Wesley), makes the same point. This study is the second of two which are a cluster of psalms, 93-100, that proclaim: “the LORD reigns.”

In the last study we observed the inevitable conflict that proceeds this announcement. If the Lord reigns, all other claims to sovereignty are false. We considered the victory of the Lord over opponents—not in matching their tyranny, but in suffering to redeem his enemies. Now, moving from consideration of conflict, we embrace the call to sing. “The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad.”

Psalm 95 begins, “Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD.” Psalm 96 goes a step further by calling for something new.

Psalm 96:1-2:

**Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.**

**Sing to the LORD, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.**

Singing to the Lord is different than talking about him or studying his precepts. We sometimes sing in church services with little awareness of God, going through the motions, distracted by the people around us. It should humble us to know that God hears our voice and gladly receives our praise. He is already listening before we turn to him.

Our song is new, day after day. We serve a living God who is endlessly creative. He knows that each day presents his children with new challenges and

opportunities. Worship in a vital relationship with God is never routine

The enduring hymn *Great Is Thy Faithfulness* is taken from the text in Lamentations that raises this same point.

Lamentations 3:19-24:

**I remember my affliction and my
wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.**

**I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me.**

**Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:**

**Because of the LORD’s great love we are
not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.**

**They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.**

**I say to myself, “The LORD is my
portion;
therefore I will wait for him.”**

His mercies, his compassions are new every morning. He finds unexpected means, time and again, to express his love for us, and we sing a new song day after day.

Our song is directed to God (praise), but it also sounds a message to those who don’t yet know him, those who are not yet recipients of grace.

Psalm 96:3-10:

**Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among all peoples.**

**For great is the LORD and most worthy
of praise;
he is to be feared above all gods.**

**For all the gods of the nations are idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.**

**Splendor and majesty are before him;
strength and glory are in his sanctuary.**

**Ascribe to the LORD, O families of
nations,
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 the splendor of
his holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth.**

**Say among the nations, "The LORD
reigns."
The world is firmly established,
it cannot be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity.**

Of course, worship: "Declare his glory among the nations" (Psalm 96:3) and witness: "Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns"" (Psalm 96:10) always go together. We cannot truly glorify God without understanding his deep love for the lost. Israel was to be a light to the nations; the church is the light of the world.

What do we learn about witness in these verses? In verse 5 there is a contrast between immense stature of the rule of the Lord and the claims of capricious regional idols. Many of our contemporaries are hoping to get by with a minimum of pain and a handful of happiness, trusting in idols (smart people, new technology, fashionable opinions). They do not know they are welcome in the presence of the One who made the heavens. We have important news to declare.

Psalm 96:8-9:

**Bring an offering and come into his
courts. Worship the LORD in the
splendor of his holiness,"**

We observe that the courts of the Lord are open to all, not just priests or others with special status. Finally, we hear the song of oceans, fields, and trees. The New Testament letter, Romans, makes it clear that sinful humanity is responsible for the degradation of the natural world.

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 7:19-21).

The created world is waiting to be set free, for an end to its frustration. The final verses of Psalm 96 anticipate the end of all opposition, a redeemed humanity which gives nature a new voice in praise of God.

Psalm 96:11-13:

**Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be
glad;
let the sea resound, and all that is in it;**

**let the fields be jubilant, and everything
in them.**

**Then all the trees of the forest will sing
for joy;**

they will sing before the LORD, for he

**comes,
he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples in his truth.**

When we revel in the beauty of the created world,
we are laying hold of glorious things yet to come.
When we live responsibly on the earth, we are honoring
the creator and bowing before the King.

Psalm 98:4-9:

**Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth,
burst into jubilant song with music;**

**make music to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and the sound of singing,**

**with trumpets and the blast of the ram's
horn—
shout for joy before the LORD, the King.**

**Let the sea resound, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it.**

**Let the rivers clap their hands,
Let the mountains sing together for joy;
let them sing before the LORD,
for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples with equity.**

Psalms 93-100 are connected by a common
theme—the reign of the Lord. Enemies submit and
the arrogant tremble. New life is apparent everywhere.
Those who were once far off are brought near. The
created world is set free to honor its maker. New songs
are composed and sung with joy.

We close with the lyrics of a Christmas carol—a
familiar song, a new song:

*Joy to the world, the Lord has come
Let earth receive her King
let every heart prepare him room
and heaven and nature sing.¹*

Amen

NOTES

¹ Isaac Watts, text of *Joy to the World!* © 1986 WORD MUSIC.

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