

Sing to the Lord a New Song!

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Three services

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Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly. Let Israel be glad in his Maker, let the children of Zion rejoice in their King! Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre! For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation. Let the godly exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds. Let the high praise of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute on them the judgment written! This is honor for all his godly ones. Praise the Lord! Psalm 149

I have a question for you again this morning. Just how personal and emotional is God?

I believe he is very personal and emotional. A man by the name of G. Walter Hansen of Christianity Today wrote, "I am spellbound by the intensity of Jesus' emotions: not a twinge of pity, but heart-broken compassion; not a passing irritation, but terrifying anger; not a silent tear, but groans of anguish; not a weak smile, but ecstatic celebration." I would add to this the shortest verse in the Bible. Do you know what the shortest verse in the Bible is? It's "Jesus wept." That's in John 11:35 during his visit to the tomb of his dear friend Lazarus who had died. It says that Lazarus' sister Mary was weeping, and the Jews who came with her to the tomb were weeping. and Jesus was touched inside and he wept also.

The Bible is filled with references to God's emotions: His love and compassion, His jealousy over us; His anger; and His rejoicing. It is certainly true that God wants to bring his children joy, but today I ask you to look at it from the other direction. It is also true that we can bring God joy.

One of the best ways we can bring joy to the Lord is by praising Him! Psalm 149 tells us this morning...(READ FROM PSALM 149 AGAIN).

Let's take a closer look at the text of these nine verses today. The psalm opens and closes the same way, doesn't it, with a command to "Praise the Lord". Don't overlook this, those of you who wish to please God. The most frequently given command in the Holy Scriptures is to "Praise the Lord".

Another question: do you "Praise the Lord!" when you come to church? I would say that are not, if you are sitting there but not participating. That's what some people do. They are spectators, not participants. They don't read the words in the hymnal; they don't follow the words on the screen. You need to be doing something other than sitting in church to "Praise the Lord!" Now I am not saying that such people are not Christians. Most of them sit in church Sunday after Sunday and I don't believe they would be doing that if they were not Christians. If they believe Jesus died to save them from their sins and have been baptized, then they are Christians. See Mark 16:16.

But are such people connecting with God as much as they should? Or do they go out of church most Sundays and feel "same old, same old". For there is a spiritual blessing in praising the Lord. One of my former youth leaders (Rev. Ray Woodie) is a minister down south and one of his favorite songs is "It's Amazing What Praising Can Do!" One of the lines in it says "I don't care that things can go wrong; Jesus lifts my heart with a song. It's amazing, what praising, can do."

I quote that because I've experienced that. I know others have experienced also that. I don't consider myself to be a good singer, but I have been blessed, and I have been lifted up by praising the Lord. I have even found that when I am alone, and I'm feeling down, I am lifted up when I praise the Lord.

Now I have lived long enough to hear the excuses: "I don't like to sing. I am not very good at singing. I don't like the music that we sing." Let me make a couple of suggestions. At the very least read the words and think about what they say. You can still praise the Lord in your heart. If you are willing to mouth the words, it keeps you focused. You might whisper them softly. It will keep you involved and you will benefit from what the Bible calls "the sacrifice of praise in the house of the Lord" (Jeremiah 33:11) Expect to be blessed. Sing to the Lord a new song!

Of course, if you don't think it is important to go to church, then it is unlikely that you are involved in praising the Lord at all. If you have read your newsletter for the month of November, then you have probably read the Bible verse I chose for the month: "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him; bless his name!" Psalm 100:4 Some people need to take an extra step here.

Now for the benefit of our deep thinkers, I'd like to look at one particular verse for a couple of minutes. Did you notice the shift in tone and direction in verse 6? It starts with "Let the high praise of God be in their throats..." and continues with "...and two edged swords in their hands..." Then verses 7-9 mentions such things as vengeance, punishment, and judgment!

In our denomination we do not believe that we are being called into a military campaign of any sort here. Indeed, in times past, some Christians have used these Scriptures to justify the use of the sword to bring about judgment against the perceived enemies of Christianity. Our church's belief is that the words "two-edged sword in their hands" are the key words here and refer to our handling of the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is sharper than any two edged sword. We minister with this Word to our own nation and to nations near and far, telling them that the wrath of God remains on those who remain in their sins and do not turn to his Son. It is our responsibility to wield this spiritual sword, in order that people might recognize their standing before God, and turn to the Savior that He has provided for their salvation.

I would add one more thing here. When we are singing to the Lord, we should make every attempt to pay attention to what we are singing. We can find ourselves sometimes singing words without really thinking about their meaning, and I would doubt that any of us are really praising the Lord when we do that. We need to concentrate on what we are saying.

I would like your help in closing this message this morning. Let us stand, and recite together the next Psalm, #150. You can find it on the front cover of our service folder for this Sunday. Let us all join in saying, "Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! Praise him with his trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!" Amen.