

September 5, 2021

Aldersgate UMC of Butte, Montana
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Scripture of Psalm 98 from The Message Bible by Eugene Peterson

Sing to God a brand-new song.

He's made a world of wonders!

He rolled up his sleeves,

He set things right.

God made history with salvation,

He showed the world what he could do.

He remembered to love us, a bonus

To his dear family, Israel—indefatigable love.

The whole earth comes to attention.

Look—God's work of salvation!

Shout your praises to God, everybody!

Let loose and sing! Strike up the band!

Round up an orchestra to play for God,

Add on a hundred-voice choir.

Feature trumpets and big trombones,

Fill the air with praises to King God.

Let the sea and its fish give a round of applause,

With everything living on earth joining in.

Let ocean breakers call out, "Encore!"

And mountains harmonize the finale—

A tribute to God when he comes,

When he comes to set the earth right.

He'll straighten out the whole world,

He'll put the world right, and everyone in it.

The Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Message

Sing to the Lord a New Song

Today's theme is Sing to the Lord a New Song! Every generation creates new songs and new music to inspire, soothe and empower the soul in everyday living! Because of life and the circumstances of life, each generation finds or discovers or creates new songs for their time. Where would we be without music and without song? I simply cannot imagine since I use music and song everyday in my devotions, in the background while I am working and when I need inspiration.

In the next few weeks we are going to explore the power in some old songs as well as new ones. Maybe, just maybe, some new songs will be birthed from members of this congregation. I can see that!

Oftentimes older hymns as well as newer hymns soothe us and comfort us when we are ailing, in distress or maybe even dying. Unfortunately, sometimes, especially with the wearing of masks, the hymns do not sound as joyful for obvious reasons. Or maybe it is that the songs no longer truly inspire as this cartoon illustrates:



One of the favorite hymn requests comes from # 474 from our hymnal, Precious Lord Take My Hand, let's hear a little background to this hymn:

Thomas A. Dorsey was born in Georgia in 1899. Many hymns, as you may already know are conceived in the throes of tragedy. "Precious Lord" was written in Chicago in 1932 following the death of Thomas Dorsey's wife Nettie and infant son during childbirth. Knowing this makes this song even more meaningful and sacred. Hear the first verse before we sing it:

*Precious Lord, take my hand,
lead me on, let me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
Through the storm, through the night,
lead me on to the light:
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.**

This song has been sung again and again during the tragic times in our history such as 9/11 and even this past year and a half due to COVID praying for strength and light to emerge in the darkness. Then and now, first responders, military personnel, police, fire fighters, medical personnel, and staff at hospitals are laying down their lives every single day they go to work. Where would we be without the heroic efforts of those who are on the

front line? No doubt this past year, many, many folks around the world have been tired, weak and worn, especially those who have laid down their lives to protect, preserve and serve our country.

September 11th will always be remembered as a tragic day in our history, but out of this tragedy so much good was born. At the end of this service will be a song to commemorate those fallen on 9/11. This tragedy gave birth to a song that commemorates so beautifully those who died. As Thomas Dorsey's tragedy gave birth to "Precious Lord, Take My Hand", countless songs have been born as a result of tragedy.

What happens when we hold back our song? Or what if we do not believe we even have a song? We will come back to that question in the weeks to come, but for now I confess that my song has been stifled at times over my lifetime. I could blame it on the church, but that would only be partially true. The reason my song has not emerged at times is because of me. It's no one else's fault but my own for holding back my song. This verse from Lao Tzu is probably the reason why and maybe this reason is true for some of you as well for holding back:

*"Care about other people's approval,
and you will be their prisoner."*

As a people striving to be disciples of Christ, we are **not** here to win a popularity contest. We are **not** here to please others. We are here to remain true to our calling as faithful people striving to be disciples of Yeshua.

People pleasers especially have a difficult time with this one because for whatever reason we do not want to disappoint family or friends or co-workers. This verse speaks volumes;

*"Care about other people's approval,
and you will be their prisoner."*

Mark Nepo in the Book of Awakening says:

For it is this song from within that keeps
the pain of living from snuffing our lives.
As long as we sing, the pain of the world
cannot claim our lives. It is this song from
within ignited, again and again, that keeps
the world going. When we do this for ourselves,
we do it for every child not yet born.

The Book of Awakening by Mark Nepo

Now you may not believe this, but everyone, everyone has a song, even if you have to borrow it. We may not have let it emerge and take form, but we have a song. What is your song?

If you have written any poetry, there very well could be a song in one of your poems. If you have yet to write your own song, what song speaks to you, inspires you, comforts you or empowers you to be a better YOU? Write that song down

I share with you something I wrote in my journal back in December and maybe, just maybe this will become a part of my song:

*The sound of snowflakes falling
Gently landing on my face
Creating a sense of awe and wonder
In this time and in this place*

*Moments like these are healing
In a world gone mad
Absorbed in themselves
Fearing the unknown and what is to come*

*But we have this moment
To cherish and to heal
Our wounds and earth's wounds
Living in harmony with all that is*

*In the midst of the madness
May we pause in this moment
To taste, to feel and to hear
The sound of snowflakes falling*

How many of you keep a journal or a diary? I have kept a journal since 1977 and it has been a spiritual practice where my deepest thoughts, feelings, fears as well as joys can be recorded. I encourage you to consider the spiritual practice of journaling which can soothe and cleanse, help and heal, inspire and empower you into a new way of being in this world. Journaling is a way of letting go what is needed in order to live in the present and experience the eternal now, the kingdom of God.

Our hymn of preparation hymn was chosen for this Sunday because of verse 2 in this hymn. May this serve to be our closing prayer:

O Come and sing this song with gladness
As your hearts are filled with joy.
Lift your hands in sweet surrender to his name.
O give him all your tears and sadness
Give him all your years of pain,
And you'll enter into life in Jesus' name.