

Lent 4
March 14, 2010

Isaiah 12:1-6
339-399-392-579

Lent Is a Time to Sing!

- I. To sing the praises of our Savior God.
- II. To sing for all the world to hear.

Dear Christian friends,

That's a neat song to sing, isn't it – "To God Be the Glory!"? It's pretty easy to GET INTO singing that one. Of if you've checked out the other hymns for today you know our last hymn is "LIFT HIGH the Cross." That's a hymn that has quickly become a **favorite** for many. People like to sing it.

It's FUN singing those hymns - but they're not your typical Lenten hymns. Do we sing "O Dearest Jesus, What Law Hast Thou Broken?" – or "Stricken, Smitten and Afflicted" – or "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" – do we sing those hymns with the SAME GUSTO and enthusiasm?

The melodies of our Lenten hymns reflect the SUBDUED, SOMBER TONE of Lent. Lent is a time of repentance. But it's ALSO a time to sing – to **sing** LOUDLY and **with gusto**. LENT IS A TIME TO SING! It's a time 1)to sing the praises of our **Savior God** and 2)to sing for all the world to hear.

I. To sing the praises of our Savior God.

"In that day you will say: 'I will praise You, O LORD.'" WHO will say that? Who sings these songs of Lent? Certainly not the scribes and Pharisees in today's gospel reading. They were IN NO MOOD to sing. They were too busy grumbling and complaining. Rather than singing they ***"muttered"*** among themselves, ***"This Man welcomes sinners and eats with them."*** Isn't that the VERY MESSAGE of Lent – that "Jesus sinners doth receive"? Lent is a time for PENITENT SINNERS to sing the praises of their **Savior God**.

During Lent we sing about our PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP with God. We sing a very personal song. NOTICE how Isaiah uses the pronouns ***"I/me/my"*** – ***"I will praise You, O LORD. Although You were angry with ME - ...You have comforted ME. God is MY salvation - ...I will trust. The LORD is MY strength and MY song."*** As we sing our Lenten songs we're not singing about WHAT WE have all done for God – but what GOD has all done for us.

We sing a confession – ***"Although You were angry with me."*** People don't like to think of God as being ***"angry."*** God is NICE – LOVING – KIND. But that God would be ***"angry"*** with us – that's **supposedly** BENEATH God's dignity. Then God is acting like a PETTY human being and not God.

People may not like it but God WAS ***"angry"*** with each one of us. ***"Angry"*** because of the way we've TREATED Him – His Word – our parents/children/spouse/brothers/sisters/neighbors, etc. God was angry because of some CHOICES we've made – the language we've used – the movies we've rented – the music we've listened to. God was angry with us BECAUSE OF OUR SINS. God wasn't dropping hints when He gave us the 10 Commandments. Each one of those commandments is a DIRECT ORDER from God we are to obey. It is a BIG DEAL in God's eyes if we gossip – skip church – drink too much, etc. We sing in one of our Lenten hymns, "YE WHO THINK of sin but lightly, nor suppose the evil great, HERE MAY VIEW its nature right, here it's quilt may estimate."

But WHAT A SONG we have to sing during Lent! ***"Although You were angry with me, Your anger has turned away and You have comforted me."*** God turned His anger AWAY from us and ONTO Jesus. God wasn't angry with His ***"beloved Son."*** Just the OPPOSITE is true! Jesus had always perfectly obeyed His heavenly Father. God was ***"well pleased"*** with Jesus and every part of

His life. Yet ALL of God's anger fell on Jesus **instead of us**. That's what Good Friday and the cross are **all about**. Jesus took the blame for the sins of the whole world and was punished in our place. Jesus sacrificed His holy life to **"take away the sin of the world."** Jesus shed His precious blood to establish that **"new covenant"** of forgiveness full and free.

During Lent I try to read one or two Lent hymns **as a part** of my daily devotions. I haven't been totally successful doing that – but it's WELL WORTH the effort. HOW those hymns bring home the truth that Jesus' death was **"the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world."** The melodies of our Lenten hymns **may be** SUBDUED – the message of those hymns is SO FULL of the gospel. Check it out for yourself in your own devotions!

WHAT A COMFORT we have to sing about during Lent! The Hebrew word for comfort **literally means** to BREATHE DEEPLY – to breath a big sigh – a big sigh OF RELIEF! **Trusting** in Jesus we can breathe a big sigh of relief. **Because of Jesus** everything is OK between God and us. Jesus has perfectly obeyed every commandment for us. Jesus has fully paid for every one of our sins. Then top it off with **Easter** – **Jesus risen** from the dead. We ARE FORGIVEN! We ARE GOING to heaven. What a relief!

So we sing, **"Surely God is my salvation."** God is the author – the source – the cause of our salvation. God DID IT ALL – **did it all** ALL BY HIMSELF. God gets ALL THE CREDIT and all the **glory**.

"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." We need water to live. We **need water every day** – EIGHT GLASSES is the **recommended amount** if I remember right. We need the gospel to live eternally. We **need to keep going back** to the gospel EVERY day. WHAT A JOY to hear and read those **familiar passages** – the Prodigal Son, etc. **What a joy** to come to church and those Lenten services – the absolution – the Scripture readings and **hymns**. What a joy to come to Communion and actually receive the very body and blood our Lord Jesus. Yes, a joy – not a CHORE – a BOTHER – a PAIN – a SACRIFICE. **"With joy"** we drink deeply of the gospel.

Lent IS A TIME for us to sing. But not all of us are **"singers."** **Some people don't even join** in the SPOKEN PARTS of the liturgy! **Maybe** we're too self-conscious - we don't have PERFECT PITCH. But we're not talking about SINGING A SOLO in front of the world. We can't tell it in the English but in the SECOND VERSE of this **Lenten song** Isaiah switches to the **plural** you. Lent IS A TIME for us to all join our voices and sing...

II. For all the world to hear.

How the world needs to hear us sing, **"Surely God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song."** Look how many people are afraid to talk about **death** and dying. Look how many people are afraid to face up to a guilty conscience or God **being angry** because of our sins. Look how many people FIND THEIR STRENGTH to **deal with life** and its problems – **find their strength** in themselves – in science – in what they see on TV. Or they **find their strength** in a bottle of beer or a bottle of pills or drugs. Look what the world sings about – where the world FINDS ITS JOY. Today's songs reflect HOW MESSED UP our country really is. **Parents**, have you taken the time to listen to the music your children are listening to?

Paul in the epistle reading asked, **"Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age?"** Many just don't have the answers to life's **all-important** questions – WHO am I? – WHERE did I come from? – WHY am I here? – WHAT'S GOING to happen to me when

I die? We need God and Lent to **answer** those questions. WE HAVE God and Lent. We need to sing FOR ALL the world to hear!

“In that day you will say: ‘Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name; make known among the nations what He has done. Sing to the LORD, for He has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world.’” We’re talking about sharing Jesus. **Sharing Jesus** with our own families – our children and grandchildren – our neighbors and co-workers. We’re talking about supporting the work of the church – Christian education for **our children** and ourselves – training future pastors and teachers – sending out missionaries throughout our country and world. **Yes**, that takes EFFORT and TIME – it costs money – LOTS of money. But thankfulness – **gratitude** – is our motivation to sing for **all the world** to hear. We don’t need gimmicks or GUILT TRIPS. We don’t need to WINE AND DINE people to get them to cough up some cash. We don’t need bake sales and **bingo**. We HAVE JESUS and His **cross**.

In thanksgiving WE SING **for all** to hear **“what God has done.”** The work of the church is to INFORM and EDUCATE – to teach Bible-based truths and doctrines. Our God has done **“glorious things”** and WHAT GLORIOUS TRUTHS we can learn from what God has done. We focus on the cross and we see that God is HOLY – that He will not tolerate or excuse sin. We gather around the cross and we also see how MERCIFUL – GRACIOUS – FORGIVING – FAITHFUL God is. At our Savior’s cross we find our salvation – find our strength – comfort – **confidence** – peace.

Sing to the Lord during Lent! **“Shout aloud and sing for joy.”** Why not **“shout aloud and SPEAK for joy”**? We can simply read our hymns without singing any of them. We can SIMPLY SAY, “Lift High the cross, the love of Christ proclaim.” We can say, **“Amazing grace**, how sweet the sound.” This Easter can COULD SKIP SINGING “I know that my Redeemer lives” and just read it instead.

We COULD just **say** them but it wouldn’t be the same, would it? Singing comes from the heart and TOUCHES the heart. Singing adds feeling and **emotion** – makes it MORE PERSONAL. I’m not going to sing about **multiplication tables** – but Jesus and His cross – THAT’S DIFFERENT!

“Shout aloud – sing for joy” – FOR ALL the world to hear. There’s no need to hesitate – to be embarrassed or **ashamed** of Jesus. There’s **no need** for us to hide our faith in Jesus **because** of WHAT OTHERS MIGHT THINK. Paul reminded us in the epistle reading that to many people Jesus’ cross is NOTHING BUT **“foolishness”** and a **“stumbling block.”** They don’t want to hear about Jesus DYING to save them from the sins and hell. **“But to us who are being saved the message of the cross is the power of God.”** THROUGH that very message of Lent God brings people to faith – makes their hearts sing – and ADDS THEM to the ever growing choir of the Holy Christian Church.

“In that day you will say.” What day? TODAY! It may be Lent – but it’s still time for US TO SING the praises of our **Savior God**. Today – because **“now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.”** Amen.

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