

March 28 (Palm Sunday)

*Singing at the Table*



**Matthew 26:30**

**30 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.**

Special Music "I Will Sing" Don Moen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lw9CcLGjouM>

## **SINGING AT THE TABLE**

**When God parted the sea  
And allowed His children to pass  
Moses and Miriam led the people in song  
A hymn of victory  
Over the Egyptians  
And the salvation of God's people**

***Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. (Psalms 47:6)***

**In praise  
And in worship  
David sang and played the lyre  
Songs of grace  
Hymns of mercy  
And repentance before God.  
Songs of humility and longsuffering  
Songs of victory and redemption**

***Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth, sing praise to the Lord, (Psalms 68:32)***

**When Elizabeth greeted Mary  
The child in Mary's womb  
Leapt with Joy.  
Elizabeth proclaimed a blessing**

**Upon the Mother of our Lord  
And upon the child she was carrying.  
And Mary sang!  
“My soul glorifies the Lord  
And my Spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”**

**I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.  
(Psalms 104:33)**

**Beaten and bruised,  
Shackled and chained.  
Imprisoned and falsely accused  
As the darkness of the night  
Cast it's shadow on their cause  
Paul and Silas sing,  
Hymns of praise  
To their ever gracious  
And merciful God.**

***I will sing of your love and justice; to you, Lord, I will sing praise. (Psalm 101:1)***

**And Jesus,  
Having reinforced His lesson in humility  
Through the washing of feet  
And the sharing of the wine and the bread at His Table,  
Sang a hymn with His disciples  
In praise of His Father**

**In praise of the moment**

**In praise of what had been**

**In praise of what was to come**

**Knowing that He had been found worthy.**

**He sang at the Table.**

**Jesus sang at the Table.**

**Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. (Psalms 96:1)**

*Rev Walt*

**When I was growing up, my momma had rules for the table. I'm sure that yours did, too. My momma's rules included:**

- 1. Wash your hands and face**
- 2. Don't slouch**
- 3. Keep your back straight**
- 4. Chew with your mouth closed**
- 5. No elbows on the table**
- 6. Eat all of your food, especially the vegetables**
- 7. Don't reach across the table**
- 8. Don't talk back to your parents or guests**
- 9. Don't kick your chair**
- 10. Don't lean back on the chair legs**
- 11. Don't wear a hat**
- 12. And never, never, ever sing at the table**

**That last one was so very difficult for me. I liked to sing. I sang everywhere I went. People generally liked to hear me sing. But momma would have none of it at the table. The table was no place for singing. And if I had brought up this verse that we are talking about today as a defense for singing at the table, my bottom would have been red for a month. i.e. Remember rule 8 – Don't talk back to your parents or guests.**

I admit it. There were times when I just couldn't help myself and it would irritate my mother to know end. It wasn't that I was a bad or intentionally disobedient child. I just like to sing and there were times when a song just came blurring out. Singing was as natural to me as talking.

My mother wasn't trying to be mean. She was trying her best to be a good mother. She wanted to instill in me good table manners. I grew up saying "Yes, sir" and "No, mam." I held the door open for strangers. I usually kept my mouth closed when the adults were talking. My mother taught and corrected me in all things polite. Perhaps that is where my desire to serve others came from. To this day, I still say, "Yes sir" and "No, mam." And to my chagrin, I am the guy who winds up holding the door open for everyone else at the movies, concerts or restaurants, even if there are fifty people attempting to pass through the doorway.

But I did not like the "No singing at the table" rule. If I was happy, I wanted to sing. If I was sad, I wanted to sing. I did not understand the rule and when I asked why I could not sing at the table, I truly hated the "Because, it's impolite" response. That wasn't really an answer for me. But this was a very important thing for my mother, so I did my best to adhere to the rule.

We often adhere to rules of etiquette that we do not understand, simply because we are told that "that's just the way it is." Or we are told to go look it up in "Emily

**Post's Etiquette: The Original Guide to Conduct in Society, Business, Home and More.” I had absolutely no idea who Emily Post was or why she could make rules about how I lived my life. For someone who was a total stranger to me, she sure made my life difficult at times.**

**It is so very strange how those rules come to be almost a habit for us without us ever even considering if they are right or where they came from. For instance: throughout the Old and New Testament, it was customary for men to cover their heads when entering the Temple or Synagogue. You simply did not come into God's presence without your head covered. That tradition continues among Jews today and it is why men wear Yarmulkes when they worship. Depending on how orthodox they are, they may also wear their Yarmulkes at work and at home. But western tradition has taught us that it is impolite to wear a hat indoors. Etiquette tells us that a gentleman removes his hat as he enters a building. Somehow, this tradition made it to church, and now it is considered rude for a man to wear a hat in church. Yet, if we adhered to Biblical standards, we wouldn't dare grace the door of a church without having our heads properly covered.**

**What I am trying to point out is this: often societal traditions intertwine themselves into our concepts of worship, and we don't bother to uncover how or why. For the Jews, wearing a yarmulke into temple is a symbol of reverence and humility. It is a way of stating that they acknowledge that they are coming into**

the presence of God. That is an extremely good reason to feel humble. I find that purpose and intent spiritually fundamental. Humility is an extremely good attitude to impose on ourselves as we enter into worship. But I do have to say, as much as I had Emily Post drilled into me, God still trumps Emily Post every time. Because of that, I really don't have a problem with men wearing hats in church. Still, if it is going to distract others during worship as they worry about who could possibly have raised us with such poor manners that we are wearing a hat in church, you might better leave the hat at the door. After all, we are called to not be stumbling blocks and being a source of distraction in worship may cause others to stumble, even if that is not our intent.

I bring all this up because we are continuing our study of the Lord's Supper and our visualization of the Lord's table is tainted with ideas, teachings, paintings, sculptures, and other art forms as well as tradition. When we hear the words "The Last Supper," our minds almost immediately jump to Leonardo Di Vinci and his masterpiece. For the longest time, it was almost heretical to think of it in any other way. Let us be honest with ourselves, the disciples and Jesus did not all line up and sit on one side of the table. That is a form of artistic license that allows us to explore the faces and interactions of those at the table through the mind's eye of Di Vinci. But remember, they weren't sitting at all. They were reclined around the table on pillows.



To Di Vinci, it wasn't about fact, but more about exploring the relationships during that time at the Table in the upper room. But because the Bible tells us one thing and cultural influence tells us another, it is important that we understand that the Table of Our Lord is, in reality, a living, breathing moment in history, a fulcrum point in our theology, a bring it home truth that isn't necessarily truthfully represented by our western culture.

The Table is that point where Jesus tells it like it is. "Please listen to what I have to say. I am going to die. I am going to be beaten, spat upon, broken, battered, hung on a cross, and die. I know that you saw everyone shouting 'Hosanna' and laying palms on the ground before us as we entered Jerusalem just a few days ago. I know you were on top of the mountain. I know you were thinking that this was how things were meant to be, and nothing could go wrong. I know you believed that the world had finally understood what we had been talking about. It is so easy for us to get entangled by the influence of a crowd. But you have painted a different picture, an idealist ending. I have been trying to tell you about what is to come, but you haven't really been listening. Those people that were celebrating our entrance into Jerusalem are very same people who are going to be calling for my death. They are going to beat and break my body. They are going to torture my soul. They are going to abuse my spirit. They are going to humiliate me. And they then are going to hang me on a cross and kill me. But listen very carefully. And this is so very important. I need you to hear me and believe what I am telling you. Three days after I am put in the grave, I am going to be raised up and come

back to you. Until that time, it saddens me to say, you are going to let me down. You are going to be afraid. You are going to be confused. You are going to hide. You are going to deny ever even knowing me in hopes that what I am about to experience will happen to you. But I AM coming back to explain it all. You have to trust me on this.”

Now one would deny that this would have been a great moment to get up from the Table and head out into the garden to pray. But no. That is not what happened. You would think, that while Jesus had their attention with all this prophetic information, that He would encourage them into a time of prayer. But instead, this is what happened

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There are a number of people in this world that believe singing is not important. That music and the arts are frivolous and not worth our time and energy. Church would only take up half an hour of our valuable Sunday if we would just get rid of the music.

But here, at this pivotal moment in history when so very much is at stake, Jesus closes this meal with a song. They sing a hymn at the table. The Bible does not

**tell us what hymn they sung, but I choose to believe that Jesus led them in a hymn of praise, glorifying His Father for His love, grace and mercy.**

**Jesus emphasizes the importance of this meal, the worship aspect of it, and the value of music as we encounter the presence of God. We can have theological discussions that take us deep into the Word of God where we end up finding more questions than answers. But music transcends discussion. Music takes our soul to places that our words cannot. Music allows us to tell God how we are feeling without saying a word. Music is one of the ways that God uses our spirit to connect with His spirit.**

**God gives us the gifts of artistic expression so that we can commune with Him in ways that just aren't possible through other human experiences and senses.**

**As I have explained before, Jesus' actions are full of intent. He teaches us the importance of becoming familiar with our creative side. If it had not been important, He would never have ended the meal with a hymn.**

**Maybe you can't carry a tune. God isn't concerned about that. Maybe you can't play an instrument. God isn't concerned about that either. Maybe you can't draw, paint, or sculpt. God isn't concerned about that. Maybe you have two left**

**feet. God isn't concerned about that. What God is concerned about, is that you have a genuine heart for worship in whatever form it takes, that coming into His presence is an act of intent and that music and art can help bridge that connection.**

**Not meaning to be disrespectful, but God will always trump Emily Post. We cannot allow the trappings and traditions of this world to form a barrier between us and our creator. I'm not asking anyone to wear a hat in church. I'm not asking anyone to throw tradition out with the bathwater. But I am asking each of us to explore how embracing society's rules and conventions might be an impediment or a distract to our worship experience.**

**As for singing at the table. Jesus was all in favor of it.**

**AMEN**

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