

November 6, 2022

Shout for Joy

Psalm 100:1-2

“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;

come before him with joyful songs.”



Special Music:

“Agnus Dei / King of Kings”

Brooke Ligertwood, Jenn Johnson, & Chidima Ubah

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVumVrkbq4s>

CREATION'S SONG

**From out of the nothingness
Came a single note
Before Creation came to be
Before mankind used eyes to see,
The note sustained
The voice God.
The celestial lyric
Boundlessly empiric
Transformed and became
All... that... is.**

**The chant of Creation's groan
Encouraging angelic tone
As they join
With pure and matchless voices.**

**The moan became a chord,
Major, minor, half-diminished,
Seeking resolution's finish,
The solution to God's loneliness.**

**The chord became cascading scales
Intimate yet plutonic,
Majestic harmonics
Bringing forth rhythms and melodies,
Shades of things that were yet to be.**

The scales resolved
From chaotic wails,
To acoustic perfection
A rumbling, tumbling intinction
Of harmonic distinction
As the voice of God
Flings forth stars, moon, and sun
The chaotic cacophony undone.
The voice moved Creation into being
Pushing light and time through space
To fill the empty place
In the God's heart.

Creation's chord crescendos
As unmasked inuendo
Refuses to disappoint
Though trapped in counterpoint
Causing the singly sung lyric
To become... a star
That dominates the night,
The brilliance Of Creation
Pales in its splendor,
As song becomes flesh.
God walks among us
Singing Creation's song.
Assuring us that we belong
Through the generation
And imancipation of our souls.

God sung a song

To make us heart-whole.

Let us join the chorus

And lift our voices

As we

“Worship the Lord with gladness;

Come before Him with joyful songs.”

There are many reasons I like this area of the country, but head and heels above everything else are the sunrises and sunsets. They are awe inspiring. Sunrises like we experience here are rare within the boundaries of any city and there is just something about the desert that produces the wonder that we find here. The colors and hues by themselves, reflecting off clouds, dare to be defined in a 128-count box of crayons. Photos and paintings try to do justice but fail when compared to the actual experience. God's sunrises and sunsets in West Texas sing to my soul, filled with harmonies and transitions, blended colors and magnificent skylines.

People want to separate the arts from reality, but they are actually two different interpretational experiences that touch the human heart. I know that I wax sentimental about such things, but these kinds of experiences allow us to see the wonder and awe of our Creator in His purest form. There is just no better way to start my day than watching a West Texas sunrise and communing with the artist. And there is no better way to end a good day's work than to watch a West Texas sunset and be able to thank the artist for a wonderful completion to the day.

When I see that display, I hear the music of the cosmos, the harmonies of Creation. Call me crazy, but I can hear and feel that music moving and flowing with the colors, and yes, it encourages me to sing in harmony and shout for joy, breaking what others would sense as silence. I feel joined with the whole of Creation. I understand that I am human. And God is.... well.... God. Everything is boiled down to the simplest of relationships. God, the Creator, singing to me

through Creation. And I, the created, singing back to the Creator. It reminds me of the reason for my being as I question the chaos that surrounds me. I am no longer grounded to the earth, but, instead, grounded in heaven. It helps me remember that I am just passing through, that the earth is not my home.

That's a lot to place on the shoulders of a sunrise. And, while we may think it is obvious to us just, because it is the only way we have known it, the truth is God decided to start our days with sunrises and end our days with sunsets. It was a conscious thought on His part as He was weaving the elements of creation. He wove sunrises and sunsets into the fabric of creation just for us. That might be hard to accept, but the creation of humans was the purpose for Creation all along. Sunrises and sunsets were not an afterthought.

We do not know who wrote Psalm 100. The Jews attribute the authorship of Psalms 90-100 to Moses, but there is no way to be sure. Still, I have a great enough imagination that I can sense Moses sitting on a hilltop looking East as the sun rises. The colors explode across the sky. And Moses pens this Psalm even as He is overwhelmed by the presences of the Lord God Almighty. I feel a kinship with him in that. How do you explain to someone the glory of a West Texas sunrise that has touched you, has changed you, has lifted you. Normal text does not do it justice. It falls short. God gave us art, poetry, and music to express what our normal tongues cannot.

**“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.”**

I often think we have forgotten how to sing, or that we are afraid or embarrassed to sing. Which is sad. Singing is one of the things that separates us from the rest of creation. Music is the closest we can get to conversing with God in His own language. We don't even have to use words. God just loves to hear us sing because singing creates a connection with God that can't be completed with the spoken word.

That doesn't mean that God doesn't understand us when we pray. He has no trouble deciphering our wants and needs no matter what language we speak. But music needs no translation. Music is the language of Creation itself. It puts us heart to heart with God so that we can understand each other without words. With music, we can express a rainbow of emotions ranging from pain, anguish, and grief to joy, peace, and belonging. You can lose yourself in music without ever understanding the lyrics. Music can take you back to a place you have been or show you a place you've never gone. Music can bring back a moment of great love. Or it can remind us of a pain that we have tried to forget.

The human in us wants to treat music a lot like we treat gravity, something that we take for granted. We don't really understand it but we do understand how it affects us. When we look at music and our relationship with God, even our best music must seem childish and pretentious to the ears of the Almighty. And yet, there is nothing that He would rather listen to.

Most people who speak a different language from us are flattered when we try to communicate with them in their own language, even if we butcher the

pronunciation. We may not have a large vocabulary and we may struggle to remember if the adjective comes before or after the object, but the fact that we attempt to interact with someone in their own language is relationship changing.

God is the same way. When we use the language of music to interact with God, we are revealing ourselves to Him at a level that we cannot tell Him with words. And He is pleased with our feeble attempts simply because we are trying to reach out to Him in the language of Creation, the language of heaven, the language on which the universe is kept in balance.

People that do not allow music to touch their lives are generally more despondent. There is a frustration that is subdued because they can't find the words to truly express themselves with their Creator. It all seems to fall short, like they are missing a piece of their soul.

That is where the Psalms come in to help us. The Psalms cover a multitude of emotions and expressions that help us speak to God in His language. Music. Song.

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing.”

Psalm 23:1

“Have mercy on me, O God;

according to your unfailing love.”

Psalm 51:1

“God looks down from heaven on all mankind

To see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.”

Psalm 53:2

“When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

In God, whose word I praise –

In God I trust and am not afraid.

What can mere mortals do to me?”

Psalm 56:3-4

For you created my inmost being;

you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

your works are wonderful,

I know that full well.

Psalm 139:13-14

When I consider your heavens,

the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars,

which you have set in place,

what is mankind that you are mindful of them,

human beings that you care for them?

Psalm 8:3-4

“Praise the Lord.

Praise God in his sanctuary;

praise him in his mighty heavens.

Praise him for his acts of power;

praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,

praise him with the harp and lyre,

praise him with timbrel and dancing,

praise him with the strings and pipe,

praise him with the clash of cymbals,

praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord.

Psalm 150

When there are no words, when our speech falls short, when the expressions of our heart seem ingenuous, when our prayers sound to our ears

like barking dogs, music will not fail us. Even if we just hum a little tune to God. That little tune says, “God, this is me reaching out to you. I hope you find it pleasing.” And he will. Even if we can’t carry a tune.

I know that there are those who think that I reach too far, that I am poking at the boundaries of theology. But there is a reason that Psalms is the longest book in the Bible. One hundred and fifty chapters of nothing but songs. Songs of praise. Songs of adoration. Songs of isolation. Songs of pain. Songs of Anguish. Songs of helplessness. Songs of redemption. Songs of rejection. Songs of grace. Songs of Thanksgiving. Songs of jubilation. Songs of love. Songs of joy. Emotions laid bare before the Creator of the universe singing to Him in His own language with an attempt to interact with Him at a spiritual level rather than our humanness. They are all there. All trying to explain to God what we are feeling and why. All trying to tell Him what we think is wrong and what we think is right. All trying to thank Him, praise Him, and engage with Him.

And He hears us. And He is pleased.

**“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.”**

I don’t know if the troubles of this world have softened our tone or muted our voices, but I fear that we have forgotten how to **“Shout for joy to the Lord”** and **“come before him with joyful songs.”** It seems to come naturally for us when we are gathered in large numbers and joined in common worship. But it just

doesn't seem to be appropriate for most of us when we are by ourselves or in a small group. Shouting and singing are not the only forms of worship, but in many ways, they are just as important as some of the other worship experiences that we hold dear.

It is far too easy for us to close our mouths so that we don't stand out. But, seriously, have you ever had a moment that you just wanted to scream? Maybe out of frustration, pain, or fear? Or perhaps watching a football or basketball game. Why are we prone to outbursts in those circumstances than our moments of awe. When we are in awe, we tend to shut down and humble ourselves almost to the point of trying to hide ourselves. It is almost like we are in fear that God won't appreciate our acclamations and songs.

But God wants us to celebrate our awe in His presence. He wants us to "shout for joy." He wants us to step from the shadows and "sing joyful songs." He wants us to celebrate Creation with Him. We are His children. We are the heirs to His Kingdom. He did this all for us. And that alone is a reason to celebrate and make some noise. He knows the number of hairs on each of our heads. He knows each of us personally. He only wants the best for us.

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14

He became flesh so that He could know the same joy and pain that we know. He died for us so that we could once again stand in His presence, even

though we are sinners by nature. He rose on the third day for us to know victory over death, that nothing is beyond His grasp and redemption. Never could we know a greater love. The Psalmist understands how much God loves His greatest Creation. No wonder that the Psalmist wants us to shout and sing. It is beyond overwhelming to feel that kind of love.

We are loved far more than we can ever know with a love so rich, and pure, and unrelinquished, forgiving of our faults and pretenses. As the Apostle Paul tells us the eighth chapter of his letter to the Romans:

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.

No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

Now, that is the reason we can all:

**“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.”**

God bless you all,

AMEN

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