

July 21

A NEW SONG



Special Music:

“Sing”

Pentatonix

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yc7-krRX8uA>

Psalm 40:1-3

**1 I waited patiently for the Lord;
he turned to me and heard my cry.**

**2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.**

**3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.**

**Many will see and fear the Lord
and put their trust in him.**

A NEW SONG

In the gloom of the darkness
I sang a muffled sad song.
A Minor keyed, dirge worthy song
As I inhaled
The smog of despair.
Like Job covered in ashes
Blanketed in sores and spiritual gashes
I moaned an unearthly toned hymn
Pandering to my flesh and bones.
My solo performed before
A fog laced mirror,
I see my soul
Alone and unatoned.

But the Spring rain
Washed away the ashes
Healed the sores
and all the gashes
As my Creator
Gathered the pieces of my existence
Into a more dignified persistence,
My countenance restored.
A new song sprang from my lips,
Major chords rising on the wind
As I turned my back to the mirror.

And the people heard the new song,
My glad song
My no longer sad song
As I stood restored
In the presence of my Creator.

I grew up singing and playing the piano. I really can't remember a time that I wasn't involved with music in some way. I sang in all of my school choirs. I sang in the church choirs. By the time I became a teenager, I was singing in both youth choirs and adult choirs. I sang solos, duets, and quartets. I was always looking for new singing opportunities. I played the piano and sang. I played the guitar and sang. I sang in and out of the shower. Singing was an integral part of my life. It still is. Music is one of my major connections to my Creator and nothing gives me more pleasure than singing of and to him. I simply love to sing.

My parents encouraged it. On long trips where other parents might play license plate games or eye spy, my parents would turn up the radio expecting me to sing along with "Sweet Caroline," "Bridge Over Troubled Waters," "Country Roads," "The Sound of Silence," and so much gospel music. I knew all the words and music by heart. I had memorized most of the words in the hymnal. I still remember most of those words. I may not be able to remember why I get up from my chair and go into another room, or where I put my truck keys, but I can still remember the words to "How Great Thou Art," "In the Garden," "Family Circle," and "Little Country Church."

But my voice has changed with age and no longer has the pure tones and range of my youth. It doesn't take away take away my desire to sing, but my singing is tempered with the timber of age. Now I find myself discouraged by the onset of Arthritis and the scars on my vocal cords. But it still doesn't keep me from wanting to belt out a tune at the drop of a hat.

As we grow older, we change. Our bodies get rearranged and no longer do what we want them to. We find our abilities limited. We don't want to accept these changes, these limitations. And yet, if we don't acknowledge the changes, we find ourselves getting hurt by attempting things meant for younger minds, younger bodies, and younger souls.

One might think that the music would stop flowing the older we get. But I haven't found that to be the case. There is something about the nature of our spirits that allows God to continue to feed our souls with new music, blessings of new tones, new rhythms, new passions. The creative nature of our living God doesn't seem to care that our bodies are no longer cooperative because our spirits seem forever young.

I don't intend to wax philosophical or theological about this to the point of being incomprehensible, but when we talk about our souls, our spirits, we are discussing a part of ourselves that refuses to age in concert with our flesh. In so many ways, the arts, including music, find a connection with our Creator. The primordial nature of our souls is not defined by our physical age.

We hear this is David's words:

**1 I waited patiently for the Lord;
he turned to me and heard my cry.
2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.**

**3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the Lord
and put their trust in him.**

He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. God continually puts a new song in our hearts because music, art, dance, poetry, all transcend the physical nature of our life here on earth. These things enable us to express to our Creator things that often cannot be boiled down to a narrative. It allows us to step, if somewhat vaguely, into the presence of God, if only for a moment as we plug into the essence of Creation.

Why does David use poetry and songs to express himself? Because verbal language is often inadequate when we talk about the nature of God. Verbal language tends to create boundaries that force a perspective that fits into the reality of our senses. But the arts are not bound by such constraints. There are no boundaries to the nature of creativity that God has given to us.

When we read our Bibles, some of the greatest moments are remembered through music. There are the songs of both Moses and Miriam sung by the Israelites after the crossing of the Red Sea. There is a song sung in the desert after God brings forth water for the Israelites. There is the song of Deborah and Baruk after the Israelites route the Canaanites. We are enamored by the eloquence of the songs of David. Solomon is credited with over 1000 songs. Ezekiel sang songs, mostly of lament. Then there is the song of Mary found in Luke. Jesus and his disciples sang hymns at the Last Supper. Paul sang hymns

in prison. It is impossible to separate the messages found in songs from our connection with God, Creator of all that is.

We sing to the Lord. We sing for the Lord. We sing with the Lord. We sing in sadness. We sing in joy. With our songs, our souls connect with our Creator in a way that can't be done any other way. Prayer is often the song of our souls reaching out to our Master

Fred Rogers said it this way, **“Music is the one art we all have inside. We may not be able to play an instrument, but we can sing along or clap or tap our feet.”** Music moves us. It teaches us. It releases us. It makes our soul flow, our mind move, and our bodies quiver. And that is a good thing. It is a reminder of a connection with God that we cannot see, but only experience. It gives us a way to express to God things that are otherwise inexpressible. What would our world be like without music?

The same joy and exuberance we find when we sing is found in Psalm 96, a song believed to be written by David when the Ark of the Covenant was returned to Jerusalem:

1 Sing to the Lord a new song;

sing to the Lord, all the earth.

2 Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.

3 Declare his glory among the nations,

his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

When I am working on a new piece of music, I take care of all the mechanics before I start. I can always change the key, rhythm, speed, volume, expressions, and instruments later. But when I am staring at a blank score and start to work, it never takes more than a few minutes before suddenly the music starts writing itself. I feel like my human nature is such a clumsy vehicle for something so Divine. I don't mean for that to sound too existential; it is just the way writing music works for me. The Holy Spirit is essential to the equation when my mind starts to wander in musical phrases and quips. The only way I have of even partially sharing that experience is when others listen and hear the passion.

People often ask me which piece of music that I have written is my favorite. The answer is always, "The one I am working on." I say that because it is the creative process that I thrive on.

I had a good friend pass on last month, unbeknownst to me. He was a violist in the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra but had retired a few years ago and moved to Illinois. He was so very talented and could make a viola weep, bleed, and praise like the instrument was human. He always encouraged me with regard to my orchestral work. I will miss him dearly.

Music is the language of our spirits as we walk in faith. Those moments that we are blessed to feel the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, in whatever we are doing, leave us craving for more. We want to draw closer to our Creator. We don't want to just hear the music. We want to feel that music running through us. We want to feel God's presence in our lives. We cherish those moments when we know is standing beside us and singing through us.

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**What do we mean by “A New Song,” as opposed to, say an old song?
What is special about a new song? A new song is the one we are currently
working on. It is where we are in life and what is happening in the moment. We
all have chapters in our lives, turning points, special occasions, moments of
transition. They are the moments that we cannot forget. Our wedding day. The
birth of a child. The time when that child leaves home. The weddings of our
children. The birth of our grandchildren. Those are all the joyous moments that
are ever present in our souls. Then there are the sad moments, the death of a
spouse, or a child. Perhaps a time of sickness or loss. They also are ever
present in our souls, even after that time when many people think we should be
healed, but the scars are still powerfully painful within us.**

**Each of these moments, happy or sad, carries a song from our souls. And
each moment brings a new song that reverberates in the chambers of our hearts.
But the new song that is the most important for us, is the song we are about to**

sing, the one coming next, the song springing forth at the moment that we experience God's presence guiding us through a precious new experience in our lives. That moment when we understand God's love for us and the abundance of grace and mercy that he bestowed on us for the first time. And then again, every time after that he steps in to shake our souls with awe and wonder, causing our lips to sing "A New Song." It never gets old, and each new encounter is, yes, "A New Song."

We've all gotten a song stuck in our heads at some point and it drives us crazy. We hum or sing the same song over and over and we even catch ourselves whistling or singing it out loud. And we can't seem to stop it. It's stuck there and all we want to do is to move on. God gives us the ability to deal with that. If you find yourself in that situation, recite a psalm or favorite passage of scripture. Better to have the word of God imprinted on your brain than a song you wish wasn't there. God wants us to move on. He wants us to sing new songs. He wants us to grow closer to him and when we do we hear new music, new songs. The more we find ourselves dependent on God the greater the opportunity for new songs to replace old songs.

I want us all to think about that this week. Are we humming the same old tune, singing the same old song. Is the music we hear the same music from when we first came to a realization of who God is to us? Or have we left the lullabies behind and found ourselves involved in the concert of Creation under the precise and meaningful direction of our Creator?

God wants to share the New Songs coming from our hearts as we draw closer to him. He wants to know that we hear the music of his creation as it moves us closer to him. Please think about that this week.

**He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the Lord
and put their trust in him.**

God bless you all!

AMEN

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