

Sing Unto The Lord For He Is Worthy. Ephesians 5:19

When we get to Scripture, we find that God **commands** His people to sing and make music.

I read the true story about a woman who bought her teenage daughter a really nice Baby Grand Piano for her birthday. A few weeks later, one of her friends asked her how her daughter was doing. “Oh,” she said, “**I persuaded her to switch to a clarinet.**”

“**How come?**” asked the friend.

“Well,” – she paused - “**with a clarinet, she can’t sing.**”

Now, I know that when it comes to the issue of singing in worship there are usually two kinds of people.

- 1. There are people who just love to sing and they’ll sing all day long in worship,**
- 2. And then there are others who’d just rather you gave them a clarinet.**

Here in Ephesians 5 we find that one of the ways we prepare our heart for the Spirit of God is: **TEXT. Ephesians 5:19 “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord”** God has always wanted His people to sing. **Ps 32:11 declares:**

“Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; SING, all you who are upright in heart!”

Psalm 105:1-4 proclaims: “Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. SING to him, SING praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.”

And Psalm 149:1-5 commands us: “Praise the LORD. SING to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints. Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King. Let them praise his name with

dancing and MAKE MUSIC to him with tambourine and harp. For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation. Let the saints rejoice in this honor and SING for joy on their beds.”

So God wants His people to sing. But why? **Why should we sing?**

Well just from those three passages we've read out of the Psalms we find that: **God's people sing because we are filled with joy and gladness.**

• We sing for joy • We sing His praises • We sing to rejoice in the blessings God has given us.

We sing, we sing, we sing, we sing.

We sing because we serve a God who makes us joyful.

One of the most famous singers in Scripture was a shepherd boy named David. He grew up to be the King of Israel and is celebrated as the “**Man After God's Own Heart**”. He could sing, and he could play a harp, and all of his music glorified God and rejoiced in His blessings.

David was a man after God's own heart, and he cemented his relationship to God through his singing and playing music.

Singing was the way David declared his joy in God.

He sang because he had a song.

ILL: Donald Hustead once wrote: “**Somehow about 40% of churchgoers seem to have picked up the idea that ‘singing in church is for singers.’ The truth is that ‘singing is for believers.’ The relevant question is not, ‘Do you have a voice?’ but “Do you have a song?”**”

David sang because he had a song. And so should we.

God never says: “**IF you can sing, sing**” God simply says **SING!** Sing your joy! One person once put it this way:

“Be more like a child today, because children sing whether they sound good or not.”

Or as one little 3 year old girl sang: “I love you Lord and I love my NOISE” **God loves it when we sing to Him.** The scriptures tell us that God inhabits the praises of His people. That means when we praise the Lord, HE is in our midst.

Because when we sing, we’re praising Him for how much joy He’s given us. But there’s another reason why should we sing.

Music changes us. It transforms us.

Singing isn’t just a declaration of our joy... **it has the power to MAKE us joyful.**

Back in 1998, researchers found that music stimulates the auditory nerves and creates brain messages that ripple through the body, influencing muscle tone equilibrium and joint flexibility.

The human heartbeat is especially attuned to sound. As music changes in tempo and volume, it acts as a natural pacemaker. Our breathing slows down or speeds up along with the music.

A study at Michigan State University some years ago found that just 15 minutes of listening to music increases levels of immune chemicals that are vital to protect us against disease.

The release of cortisol (the “**stress hormone**”) dropped by up to 25%.

In addition, they found that music has a direct effect on the function of the brain. It can slow down and equalize brain waves to create a meditative state or it can energize brain waves, quickening the thinking process and enhancing ones creativity.

Then in 2001, scientists were amazed to find that **music is able to help heal the body.**

- Burn victims, encouraged to sing while having their dressing changed, experienced less pain.
- Cancer patients who listened to - and practiced with - musical instruments, saw their levels of stress hormones drop and their immune systems get stronger.

One college Professor observed: "**By helping patients relax, music eases pain and may even speed recovery,**"

So, just on a **physical level**, music has the power to sooth the savage beast of our lives.

But on a **spiritual level**, songs can do even more than that for us because **Christian music has words, and those words**

focus on God's power and love. That's one of the reasons that Paul tells the church at Ephesus as we read from today's text:

"SPEAK TO ONE ANOTHER with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs..." Ephesians 5:19

Focus on the words of those songs, because the words we sing on Sunday morning lift us up... they don't drag us down.

If you listen to the popular music of our day you'll find a vast number of songs that communicate:

Hopelessness- Immorality- Anger and rage- Selfishness and self-centeredness.

The University of Pittsburgh did a study a few years ago where they examined **279 of the top songs on the radio**. They ONLY looked at references to drugs and alcohol but what they found is instructive:

- **Gangster rapsters** – spoke favorably of these items in 80% of their songs.
- **Country music** had 37% of its music praising the wonders of alcohol.
- **Rhythm and Blues** followed with 20%.
- **Rock** had 14% of its songs praising drugs and alcohol.
- **And Pop** music had 7%.

And that's just the references in popular music praising drugs and alcohol.

The scholars of this study didn't examine the songs that told of sexual immorality, vengeance and greed. And they didn't

consider the vast number of songs that were filled with hopelessness and despair.

Many of the songs that are popular on radio don't lift people up. **They drag people down and encourage lifestyles and attitudes that rob people of joy.** But by contrast, **psalms, hymns and spiritual songs tell us about a God that loves us and cares what happens to us. They lift us up and give a reason to have joy in our lives.**

Have you ever struggled with feelings of despair? It was probably hard for you to control the emotions of sadness and gloom. But then one day you started singing a song and it somehow made you feel better. Maybe it was a song like this:

**"This World is Not My Home, I'm just a passing thru
My treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore."**

Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs have the power to transform us, and the power to give us joy in a world that is often difficult and harsh. In fact, they have even more power than that.

In Acts 16 we're told of the time Paul and Silas were arrested for preaching the Gospel. They were beaten, chained and locked in a jail cell where their feet were fastened in stocks.

- And just HOW did they respond to this?
- How did Paul and Silas react to the injustice of their punishment?
- The pain of their beatings?
- The terror of a jail cell that they shared with vermin and rats?
- The uncertainty of what their future held?

What did they do? They sang?

Acts 16:25 tells us that **"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them."** And then what happened?

“Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody’s chains came loose.” Acts 16:26 Did their singing create the earthquake?

No... their God did that.

But when they sang, they declared their faith in a faithful God who could do stuff like that. Their singing was like a faucet that they turned on and opened up the pipeline of God’s power.

Singing does that. So God says SING!

Not IF you can sing, sing. Just sing.

- **Sing because you HAVE a song of joy**
- **Sing because IT CAN GIVE you a song of joy**
- **Sing because singing can give you the power of God in your life. **And what should I sing?****

Ephesians 5:19 tells us about 3 kinds of songs – **psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs** – but this morning, I want to focus on two other classifications of song. It occurred to me, as I was studying for this sermon that there were two other kinds of songs God’s people sang.

1st - They sang old favorites. Just like we do today, the Jews had songs they’d sing over and over again.

Psalm 120. What are the first 4 words of that Psalm? **“A Song of Degrees”** KJV).

Now, look at the next Psalm, Psalm 121. What are the 1st 4 words in that psalm?

Look at Psalm 122, and 123 and 124.

There are 15 Psalms that all begin with those four words.

There are scholars who believe that these 15 Psalms were sung every year by the Jews as they went up to worship, and they were sung during their pilgrimages to Jerusalem and at the times of the great yearly festivals — as they “ascended to Jerusalem” (thus the term “Songs of Ascents or degrees” depending on which translation you are reading).

Every year, they'd sing those same psalms over and over again. And every year as they'd hear them, they'd know it was time to make their pilgrimage.

It's kind of like Christmas time. When you go shopping around that season, what do you hear played in department stores and malls? Christmas songs. We sing those "**Old Favorites**" every Christmas season, over and over and over again, and they declare to all who listen what time of year it is.

So, the people of Israel loved to sing "**Old Favorites**", just like we do. • **Sweet Hour of Prayer** • **It is Well With My soul** • **When The Roll is Called Up yonder.**

And the beauty of the old Favorites is that they are like mile markers to us. They remind us of the good things we've learned in church and the fellowship we've enjoyed together and the blessings we've seen throughout the years. They're like comfort food. And just hearing them can create warm fuzzy feelings of our relationship with God and His people.

2. But God's people also sang **another kind of song**. God wants us **to sing a new song**.

Psalm 96:1 "**Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth**"

Psalm 33:3 says the same: "**Sing to him a NEW SONG; play skillfully, and shout for joy.**"

Psalm 144:9 says "**I will sing a NEW SONG to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you**"

Psalm 149:1 declares "**Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a NEW SONG, his praise in the assembly of the saints.**"

David even said Ps 40:3 "**(God) put a NEW SONG in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God...**"

And then in Revelation we read:

"And (those gathered around the throne of God) sang a NEW SONG: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you

purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. Revelation 5:9

So, God want us to learn “**new songs**”. But, why?

Well 1st because, too often, the old songs (pause) can get old. It’s the same words – over and over and over again.

I cut my teeth on songs from the hymnal, and I love almost all of them. But I remember as a boy hearing the opening strains to some of those hymns and thinking “**O dear Lord, not that old slow song again!**” **The old songs can get old.**

And one of the other problems with the same old songs being sung ALL the time is that there are times when God’s saints sing those hymns **without ever considering the meaning of the words**. They sing them by memory, and while the songs give them good feelings, the message doesn’t make a dent in their thinking.

By contrast, “**new songs**” make us think about the words. “**New songs**” can get us out of our comfort zone, and make us think about God’s love and mercy in new ways.

Still another reason we should learn “**new songs**” is - **their newness reflects the God we serve.**

We don’t want to get into the mindset where we think that God just did things in the past, but not now. **New songs remind us that God still works in our lives today.**

In Lamentations 3, we read: “... **his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.**”

Lamentations 3:22b-23

We serve a God who does something new for us every day and new songs reinforce that message: they declare that we believe God is always doing something new every day of our lives.

One of the things I enjoy about this church is that we love the old favorites... but we’re also not afraid to learn new songs that glorify God and praise Him for His love. Singing

helps us look at God in a way that no other form or worship can accomplish.

A man named Jack Hinton was on a short-term mission's trip to the island of Tobago. He was leading worship at the leper colony there and there was time for one more song, so he asked if anyone had a request.

A woman who had been facing away from the pulpit turned around.

"It was the most hideous face I had ever seen," Hinton said.

"The woman's nose and ears were entirely gone. The disease had destroyed her lips as well. She lifted a fingerless hand in the air and asked, 'Can we sing Count Your Many Blessings?'"

Overcome with emotion, Hinton left the service.

He was followed by another team member who said, **"Jack, I guess you'll never be able to sing that song again."**

"Yes I will," he replied, **"but I'll never sing the same way." I have to tell you friends that I have never understood why God's people have to be pumped up to sing. Encouraged to lift their voices and magnify the Lord. He has done sooooo much for us.**

Yes church, let us Sing Unto The Lord For He Is Worthy.