

Thanksgiving 2023 Ps. 98:1-9 Thankful for God's Rescue 11/23/23 Falls OPC

We tend to only think singing for joy when times are good, but in the life of the OT Psalmist and in the life of the NT Apostles, there is an important reminder for us. Singing for joy is an expression of God providing us with strength during difficulties. In the first century, the Apostle Paul and his companion Silas were being unjustly held in prison for the sake of the gospel. What did they do while they were in prison? Acts 16:25 tells us that they sang praise to God! Why? Because even while they were in prison bodily, they knew that they were rescued spiritually.

This truth seen in believers in the OT and believers in the NT has also been confirmed in believers in history - the lives of persecuted believers in the last 2,000 years. For example, consider the report of one pastor who during our lifetime was imprisoned for his faith: "...When we were in prison, we sang almost every day because Christ was alive in us...the guards put chains on our hands and feet to add to our grief. Yet we discovered that the chains were splendid musical instruments! When we clanged them together in rhythm, much like children clap hands, we could sing, 'This is the day (clink, clank), this is the day (clink, clank), which the Lord has made (clink, clank), which the Lord has made (clink, clank)..."

Because our King has rescued us, our response is singing for joy.

1. Our rescue. (v.1-3)

In verse 1, it is known that God has done marvelous things. So, how should we respond? *"Oh sing to the LORD a new song..."*

What God does to rescue His people is known, so we respond by writing new songs and singing about our rescue. It is known that God's salvation has been worked by God's right hand and God's holy arm. So, how should we respond? *"Oh sing to the LORD a new song..."*

Verse 2, God Himself has made known His salvation actions. Because God had covenanted to rescue His people, and then God did, in fact, rescue His people, God revealed His own righteousness by the consistency of His words and actions. Verse 2b, *"...He has revealed His righteousness ...all...have seen the salvation of our God."* So, how should we respond? *"Oh sing to the LORD a new song..."*

In verse 3, God Himself knew and remembered His actions to rescue His people Israel. But God was not the only One who knew about His actions to rescue His people. God's rescuing efforts had been made known and revealed in the sight of the nations. By the end of verse 3, worldwide knowledge of our rescuing God was celebrated by singing these words, *"...All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God."* So, how should we respond? *"Oh sing to the LORD a new song..."*

What was the driving force behind the rescue? Verse 3 tells us. God “...has remembered His steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel...”

The driving force behind the rescue was LOVE! God’s steadfast love. God was faithful to His loving promise. So, how should we respond? “*Oh sing to the LORD a new song...*” This is what Mary did. Same themes, new song.

There is a remarkable similarity of Psalm 98 with Mary’s song in Luke 1.

Psalm 98

Mary’s Song Luke 1

(v.1) *He has done marvelous things* = v.49 *He who is mighty has done great things for me.*

(v.1) *His right hand and his holy arm* = v.51 *He has shown strength with His arm Have worked salvation for him*

(v.2) *The LORD has made known His* = v.50 *His mercy is for those who fear him Salvation; He has revealed His from generation to generation Righteousness in the sight of the nations.*

(v.3), *He has remembered His steadfast love* = (v.54) *He has helped His servant And faithfulness to the house of Israel Israel, in remembrance of His mercy.*

(v.4) *Make a joyful noise to the LORD* = 46-47 *My soul magnifies the LORD, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.*

Starting with OT Psalms, then continuing with Mary and then the apostle Luke writing down Mary’s new song, and since that time in the Christian missionary task, it is being made known to the nations the best rescue that God ever offered. That rescue is accomplished through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Through the cross and the victory of His rising again, we are rescued from our sins, we are rescued from our wayward leaning, we are rescued from the consequences of our sins, which is our own death, we are rescued from the world, that would try to pull us back into sin, and we are rescued from the evil one.

2. Our victory song. (v.4-6)

Verse 4 tells us to “*break forth into joyous song and sing praises!*”

Verse 5 tells us to “*sing praises with the lyre and the sound of melody.*”

Verse 6 tells us to sing “*with trumpets and the sound of the horn,*” and that the goal of our singing is to “*make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD!*”

What if we think we don’t have much for which to be joyful in song today?

The answer is to think differently – to realize the truth that we each have the same amount for which to be joyful in song.

Charles Spurgeon told the story of a ragged boy who came to church alone and sat in the front row of a country church. The preacher often tried to talk to the boy after church, but the boy always slipped away. For a few weeks the boy was missing from worship, and the preacher did not know why. One day, a man came to the church building to see the preacher. He asked the preacher to please come and visit his son, that same boy, because the boy had become very sick and now

lay in danger of dying. The man apologized that the preacher would need to travel the six miles to their home. The preacher took note that six miles was how far the boy had been walking to get to worship each week. The father said to the preacher, “He asks only for you, and he is speaking about things that I do not understand.” The preacher went, and came to a poor shack in a desolate mountain valley. The father welcomed the preacher into the shack. He went in and found the boy in the corner on a straw mat. When the boy saw the preacher, he mustered his strength, he sat up, he stretched out his frail little arms and said, “*His right hand and His holy arm have worked salvation for Him.*” Shortly after that, the boy died.

Our God is the type of rescuing God that the boy understood God to be. Where is the rescue, you ask? Our God rescued that boy from eternal death! Our God can give true faith to a young child, a faith that conquers his sickness, by giving him the joy of rescue now, and later, the actual rescue from eternal death forevermore.

We each have lived on earth much longer than that boy did. But in the perspective of eternity, all of us - that boy and you and me - we all have the same amount for which to be joyful. The amount is the full rescue, the great salvation accomplished by the right hand and holy arm of our rescuing God.

We can say with the boy - His holy arm has worked salvation for Him.

We can say with the Virgin Mary – my soul magnifies the Lord.

We can say with the Psalmist v.1 – oh sing to the LORD a new song.

With the Psalmists in v4, we break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

John Wesley used to tell his church that it is not fitting after we have called upon trumpets and horn, and after we have called upon all the earth to make noise, that we the actual rescued ones, we the very living ones, ourselves sing God’s praise as if we were half asleep or half dead. Pastor Wesley prodded his church - let us lift up our voices with strength and sing from hearts full of gratitude for our rescue! Long after all the nations and all the sports teams have been forgotten, we will still be victorious. Let’s sing our victory song with hearts of joy.

3. Our back-up chorus. (v.7-9)

Over in Psalm 47:1, the Bible says, “Clap your hands, all peoples!”

What is unique to Psalm 98 is bringing components of nature into our back-up choir that are accompanying us in singing to worship God, such as having “...the rivers clap their hands...”

The Psalmist now says who will sing along with us are inanimate objects! Verse 7, sea and all that fills the sea, and all the land of the world, all those who dwell on the land of the world, verse 8, rivers and hills, which are symbolic of the entire creation, are to join with the people of earth to announce the coming of God, who will, as verse 9 says, “...judge the earth...[and] He will judge the world!”

Okay, since the rivers and hills are supposed to be our back-up singers, then what are they waiting for? Go ahead and sing!

Well, God gave us an answer to that. The hills are waiting for Christians to receive the fullness of our salvation. Romans 8:19, *“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.”*

All of the parts of creation are waiting to join our singing until man, their master, has perfectly entered righteousness and equity. That happens when Christ comes again. Christ is coming. Here in Psalm 98, verse 9, human worshippers of God were celebrating the coming of Christ! In verse 9, the key words are *“for He comes.”* Listen verses 8 and 9 together, *“Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the LORD, for He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.”*

Just as in the Old Testament, believers anticipated the first coming of Christ, and there was much joy when Jesus came, so also in the New Testament, believers anticipate the SECOND coming of Christ, and there will be much joy when Jesus comes. The difference is, that the joy is already with us now. The first coming of Christ already brought us rescue. We stand in grace. Joy has begun. Let joyful singing commence!

CHRIST – The New Testament shows God the judge also as God the Rescuer. We read in Hebrews 10:14, *“...by a single offering [Christ] has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”* God’s judgment against our sins is seen in Christ being offered up, and God’s rescue is seen in Christ’s sanctifying us from our sins. Similar to the first coming of Christ, also the second coming of Christ will bring both God’s judgment to some and God’s rescue to us. The creation will celebrate our rescue with us.

Conclusion: We are not yet there with elements of creation singing with us. But we already have a beginning – we are already singing. Did I mention that we have the main melody? We already have faith. We already have Christ. We already have rescue. The Rescue we already have today is the same rescue that will bring us all the way to heaven. The joy in our singing today is a part of the same joy of heaven.

In the novels called the Chronicles of Narnia, when the land of Narnia was under the power of the wicked witch of the North, the land had ‘Always Winter, never Christmas.’ ‘Always winter, never Springtime.’ But when Aslan, the Christ-figure in the story, rose from the dead, the ice began to melt, the flowers began to bloom, the trees began to turn green like Spring. Pictures of what will actually happen.

The sea will roar in support of our singing words of praise to God.

The rivers will clap their hands in confirmation of our songs.

The hills will sing for joy right along with us.

We will all be thankful for Rescue. That song of joy has already begun.

Ephesians 1:7-10, “*In [Christ] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which He lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.*”

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