

DCF:

Do you like to sing? I'm not talking about singing in the shower or alone in the car on the way to work. I'm talking about singing with friends, or here in church. Some do. Some don't. Why? Well, maybe it's because our voices aren't as good as what we hear on the radio or on "The Voice." Maybe it's because we might hit the wrong note or sing the wrong word. Maybe it's because we can't carry a tune in a bucket. Or, we never learned how to sing and think we're too old to learn.

But did you know that all of you are singers? It's true! All believers do sing. Some sing with their voice. Some sing with their lives and some sing with their thoughts.

Today we dig into the book of Isaiah, who urges us to shout aloud and praise the Lord for all that He has done. Come with me today and see "**THE SOURCE OF OUR SONG.**" It's God, not us, and the Holy Spirit is the One who moves us to sing. Let's go to the sheet music of our song, the Bible, and start reading the notes.

Part One: It's God, not us

What did you do the last time something good happened in your life? When you got a new phone, bought a different car, got a promotion or raise, got married, had a child or a new job? You celebrated! Oh, maybe you didn't go out for dinner, but you did something. You had to rejoice, to celebrate because something good happened. Maybe you did the dance of joy, or whooped once or twice. Maybe you pumped your fist and said "yes!" Maybe you did the German celebratory head nod. No matter what, rejoicing is a natural response to good things in our lives. That's the way God wired us.

Now, most of the celebration events I just listed are the results of our efforts in this life. It's true God gives us our talents, time and the opportunity to do things. He is the One who blesses us when we use His gifts. But today Isaiah encourages us to rejoice over an event that has nothing to do with our efforts. It's all about God and what He has done. Look again at verse 1: "***In that day you will say: 'I will praise You, O Lord. Although you were angry with me, Your anger has turned away and You have comforted me.'***"

There's an inconvenient truth in this verse, a truth we don't like to hear. God was angry with us because of our sin. We were born with a sinful nature, hostile to God and adamantly fighting against Him at every point in our lives. We see that nature still at work in our lives, even though we now believe in Him and want to live for His glory and praise. We see sin at work when we "forget" to pray, or to read His Word. We see sin at work when we snap at others for no real reason; when we worry about our bills, forgetting that God will take care of us. We see sin at work when we envy our neighbor's stuff or gossip about a co-worker. We see sin at work when we take someone's comment in the worst possible way. God is not only angry at our big sins. God is angry at the so-called little ones, too. Sin separates us from the One who created us to be His glory and praise. And yet... Isaiah tells us that His anger has turned away. How did that happen?

Well, it's not because of anything that we did. Oh, we would like to think that the money we put in the plate mollified Him a bit. We'd like to think that the nice words we spoke to our kids calmed Him down a bit. We like to think that just being here today somehow turns away His anger.

But here's the zinger. "***All our righteous acts are like filthy rags.***" It's not about us. It's all about Him. In previous verses of his book, Isaiah had praised God for the Israelite's exodus from Egypt. He did all the work for that fantastic deliverance. Here, Isaiah praises God for our exodus from sin's ultimate punishment. It was God who saw the problem - sin. It was God who planned the solution. It was God who made the solution happen. It's God, not us.

From eternity, God had it all planned out. The second person of the Trinity would put on human flesh. He would live the perfect life that we can't. He would go to the cross and suffer in our place. And then, the Holy Spirit would come through the Word of God and give us some fantastic gifts. He gives us Christ's perfection, Christ's righteousness, His image, His love. It's all about God, not us. "***Your anger has turned away and You have comforted me.***"

Oh, the blessings that come from God! His gift of a Savior comforts us when we are faced with temptation and doubts. I think you know what I'm talking about. Does God love me? What if He doesn't? Does God forgive me? What if He doesn't? Is God aware of me? Does He watch over me? Is He making all things work out for my spiritual good? You and I both know that we can't do it by ourselves. God can, and does. "***Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.***"

When God convicts us of who we are - sinners - and convinces us of what He has done, there is only

one thing we can do. Sing a song of praise to Him! ***“The Lord, the Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.”*** The Holy Spirit moves our hearts to respond with the praise that God so richly deserves.

Part Two: The Holy Spirit moves us to sing

What do we do when someone does something good for us? We respond with thanks and praise. If someone cut your grass when you were on vacation, you said thanks and told others what a great neighbor he is. If your teacher gave you some extra attention in a subject you were struggling with, you thanked her and told your friends what a great teacher she was. If a co-worker stood up for you in a meeting, you thanked them and let others know how much you appreciated them. If a friend got you out of an awkward conversation at a party, you thanked them and praised them to others.

When we truly understand what the Lord has done for us, the Holy Spirit moves us to thank and praise Him. You can say that redemption produces praise. When we realize that Jesus saves us from eternal death and the guilt that rides us like a sadistic jockey, we’ve just got to show our gratitude. But how can we do that? How can we praise God for all that He has done? Shout it from the rooftops?

I suppose that’s one way. But is it the best way, the only way? Isaiah lists several ways that we can give thanks to God. Let me read verses 4 and 5: ***“Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world.”***

The first way we sing our praises to God is in prayer. We ***“call on his name,”*** we give Him credit in our personal and private talks with God. In our prayers, when we are thanking God for our family, our health, our jobs and our friends, we are singing our song of praise directly to Him.

Another way we sing praises to God is when we ***“make known among the nations what he has done”***. We sing praises to God when we support our Synod’s mission programs throughout the world. We sing praises to God as we raise our children to know and trust in the God of our salvation. We sing praises to God when we talk to our friends and neighbors here in Green Bay about the Savior. Talking about our Lord is the melody line of our song of praise.

Some of us aren’t ready to carry the melody line, are we? We aren’t sure of the notes. We don’t quite trust our voices to sing the lead. That’s ok for now. The time will come when you can talk freely and confidently about your Lord. Until then, keep on singing the harmony of our song of praise.

Here’s what I mean by that. You may not yet feel confident enough to talk about your Savior with strangers, but you can still give Him praise in this world of ours. You’re singing the harmony when you volunteer to help after a natural disaster, like the hurricane down south this past year. You’re singing the harmony when you help your 95 year old neighbor get to the doctor. You’re singing the harmony when you let someone cut in line at the grocery store, or let them in traffic ahead of you. You’re singing the harmony when you donate or serve at a food pantry. Don’t worry. The time will come when the Holy Spirit will move you to ***“Shout aloud and sing for joy.”***

When I was in school, I was in choir. I loved it. But you didn’t just open the music and sing a great song. It took practice. Learning the what. Learning the how. And, then learning how to sing with others. The time came, after much practice in the classroom, that we were ready to sing to others.

Who hears your song of praise right now? Maybe it’s just one or two people right now. Your husband? Your wife? Your children? Your best friend? Here at Messiah we have a great chance to practice singing our song of praise. Focus on the words of our worship service. Put your heart, mind and voice in the responses and the hymns. Don’t get worship ADD. What’s that? It’s where you’re constantly changing your focus as we worship. We start singing a hymn and you notice that your shoe is untied. We start praying and you wonder if you left the garage door up when you left for church. We start listening to the sermon and the pastor says something that knocks our minds off on a different track. It takes effort to learn our song of praise, but the Holy Spirit is right there with us giving us the strength and the focus to sing it to the glory of our God. Remember who we’re praising. Remember what He has done. Remember and rejoice!

Not everyone loves to sing with their voice, do they? And yet, we are all part of the choir of God. We sing with our voices. We sing with our actions. We sing with our prayers. Whether you’re singing the melody or the harmony, you’re singing praises to the Lord. Let ‘er rip! Rejoice!

AMEN