

Psalm 98 – Short Meditation

Today is the first Sunday since mid-December last year, on which we are allowed to sing in church again. Still with masks, but we can sing... use our voices, cheer, and praise.

During those long months in which we were not allowed to sing, I often thought “how can they keep us from singing?” Not even the slaves in centuries ago, on the sugar cane or cotton fields could be kept from singing... But here, at the beginning of the 21st century, in this modern and global world, those who govern us silenced our worship, and the pandemic robbed us of an essential way of praising our God and sharing our faith.

I am so grateful that we are back to the singing. Singing shall have a major place in this service. This is, why I chose Miriam’s song and a psalm of King David as texts for our worship today.

The Israelites always danced and sang at a time of great rejoicing. The tambourines which Miriam and her friends used were probably made of animal skin stretched over a wooden frame which had metal pieces in it to rattle. When they worshipped, they made music, danced, and sang.

King David had a lyre.

When he was a young man, he’d ben called to King Saul’s court to play on it. This was at a time when King Saul was sad and frustrated, and full of bad and unhappy thoughts. His servants and friends tried to help him and to restore his good mood and happiness. They chose an excellent young musician – David - to cheer up the old king with music and songs.

David always enjoyed making music and singing. When he was a king, he was as well a composer, a singer, and a harpist. He wrote many religious songs. One of them is our psalm today. David’s songs expressed his feelings about God, and the things which happened in his life.

In a book of paintings by the famous painter Marc Chagall I found the painting of King David and his harp which is on the front page of your bulletin. King David is painted in tender shades of pink, red, and purple. I imagine his music soft, bright, and cheerful.

David does not look at us. He is totally immersed in his music. Lovingly he holds his instrument... as if he is almost one with it... one with his music. He seems thoughtful and

dreamy. What may he think about? Love? Joy? Happiness? Moments of the past? His successes in battle? His mistakes at court? His shortcomings when it came to relationships? His guilt? Is he seeking peace and comfort in the music? Lightness? The fulness of life? We don't know.

But in Psalm 98 he seems to have found it: the fulness of life.

He sings about God's love for us. ...about nature rejoicing. Psalm 98 shows in overwhelming clarity that praise is not limited to human creatures. Here the earth makes a joyful noise, rivers clap their hands, and hills sing for joy.

People use their voices and their instruments... And in all that is God - with his righteousness.

Some say Psalm 98 forms the theological heart of the psalms. The message is as simple as it is clear: God reigns!

God's faithfulness and love will never end. God changed and changes the world... and this has implications on how we live, love, interact, treat nature, commit to justice and peace, and care for the future... in sheer love... nothing more and nothing less.

Not power and wealth and success, but LOVE.

Hymn

Activity

Take a moment...

Think of the beauty of nature.

Think of happiness and joy.

Imagine trees dancing, waters shouting for joy, animals running in tall green grass, and flowers standing in full blossom and all colours.

Sit a while in silence and awe.

Reflect on your thankfulness to an awesome God who deserves our praise.

How can we praise?

How can we keep from singing?

Write a verse of praise on the little leaf you were given with your bulletin, and when we sing the next hymn, come up front to the Peace Church tree and add your praise to it.