

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Old Testament book of the Prophet Isaiah the twelfth chapter beginning at the first verse:

And in that day you will say: "O LORD, I will praise You; Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. ² Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation." ³
Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation. ⁴ And in that day you will say: "Praise the LORD, call upon His name; Declare His deeds among the peoples, Make mention that His name is exalted. ⁵ Sing to the LORD, For He has done excellent things; This is known in all

the earth. ⁶ Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!"

Heavenly Father, sanctify us by the truth. Your word is truth. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

For Martin Luther music was right next to theology as to its importance for a Christian. As Luther says, ***"Music is an outstanding gift of God and next to theology. I would not want to give up my slight knowledge of music for a great consideration. And youth should be taught this art; for it makes fine, skillful people."*** He also said, ***"Music has the natural power of stimulating and arousing the souls of men."*** And also, ***"Music is God's greatest gift. It has often so stimulated and stirred me that I felt the desire to preach."***

Anyone who has ever been around while I am writing a sermon can attest that I take Luther's words to heart. When writing a sermon I am generally humming a tune or listening to Handel's Messiah (a personal favorite). Also, I am trying to figure out which songs would go with the sermon and how they would best 'improve' the entire worship for the people.

Yet, when it comes to singing, why are we so afraid to do it? Hymns are posted and chosen for a given weekend and at times it is as if no one knows which hymn we are singing. We get to a certain hymn and we are silent, or at least very muted while singing. We hear a certain melody and it is like a foreign language has been placed in our mouths and we mumble and stumble through the song.

Now, no, this is not a sermon berating people for singing... that would be foolish, but it will make a unique comparison between our

singing and our understanding of God. For, I would argue, that when we truly know our God and the salvation that He has won for us, we will never tire or be afraid to ***Sing to the Lord.***

What is the phrase, "Sing like no one is listening, dance like no one is watching, love like you've never been hurt..." And we do. When we are alone and we know that no one else is around, we sing like no one is listening. And we all have a favorite song, the one we know all the words to, the one that when it comes on the radio we sing as loud as we can, the one that can change our entire day just by hearing it. However, if someone is around, if there is even the chance of another person hearing us, if we are in a 'different' place or car, we clam up like we've never heard the song before in our lives.

We do some of the same in church, do we not? We could know a song inside and out, but when we come into church we clam up and act as if “Go Tell it on the Mountain” were some new, never heard, before song. Even around friends, around fellow Christians, at times, we can clam up and be silent. Maybe it’s because we don’t think that we have the prettiest voice or maybe it’s because we don’t want to ‘stand out,’ but how easy is it for us to be quiet in church and during the hymn singing?

Now think about your everyday life. We know our Savior. We know God. We know Him intimately. We dine with Him, we spend free time with Him, we love Him and He loves us... but when someone else is around we get real quiet real quick.

Ever eat a meal not in your home... how loud do you pray? Ever see another person sin blatantly in front of you... how often of

you call them out on it or talk to them about it? Ever knock on someone’s door to give a survey for your church or talk to someone about your church... how quickly do you clam up about your church and your faith and focus on the weather and questionnaire?

Just like knowing our favorite song and jamming out to it alone, we often do the same thing with Jesus. We know Him and yet when others want to know about Him it is very easy to be quiet about Him. When others need to hear about Him it is very easy to act as if “Jesus” is a new song or a foreign language that you never chose to learn.

Just as Isaiah reminds us in our text, ***“Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid.”*** Does that sound like you often? God is here to protect me, I will not be afraid... but just like with our singing and our music, how often do we worry that we will offend people? How often do we fear

that our “Jesus talking” will turn people away from us? How often do we worry that people will mock us for our ‘singing’ about Jesus and all that He has done? ***“I will not be afraid...”*** It’s a lot easier said than done, is it not?

In this life it is very easy to be afraid, it is very easy to be fearful of what others think, of what others care about, of how others will perceive us. It is very easy to worry and be afraid about every one else... but to neglect God.

Think about it, is God more praised and honored when you talk about Him or when you act like you don’t know Him? Is God honored when you bow to the whims of the world and ignore Him? Is God praised when you act like a mute about Jesus because someone might ‘look at you funny’? These are all things that we can relate to and they are all things that keep us quiet and silent

about Jesus... who truly is and ought to be our FAVORITE SONG.

And though we treat God this way, in a very unflattering way, God treats us the complete opposite way. While we might be silent about God, He is never silent about us. In fact, God loved us so much that He sent His Son into this world to redeem us. He sent Jesus Christ into this world to live the perfect life, always singing God’s praise, always making ‘joyful music’ to God with His life and His actions. Jesus was the perfect Son of God for us... and Jesus played His final note as He died for us. He was beaten, mocked, and hung on a cross to die. He died for each and every one of us. He died to take away all of our sins. He died so that we do not need to fear anymore.

For three days later Jesus Christ rose from the dead to proclaim that His life and death were sufficient for all people, and that

though faith in Him we now have eternal life. Christ rose to proclaim that He has overcome sin, death, and the devil... Christ has overcome the world and we no longer need to fear the world. Christ rose so that we would be assured that we now have heaven waiting for us when this life is over. And through faith in all that our Savior has done we know that this is true. Through faith in our Savior we now know that Christ has dominion over the world and that the world cannot harm us.

And now with the church triumphant, with those who have gone before us, we can sing Isaiah's song to our God. "Lord I will sing Your praise. Yes, You were angry with me when I sinned and when I shunned You... but You have sent redemption. You are my salvation, You are my strength, my trust in You will never go away and will never be dulled. Praise the Lord... and let all the

world know about all that He has done for each and every one of them also."

This is the song that we can sing, in faith, to our God and to the world around us. Yes, everyone needs to hear this message... not just the person sitting next to you in the pew.

As Luther says about singing in the church, ***"Nevertheless, the use of notes or music, as a wonderful creation and gift of God, helps greatly to produce this effect, especially when the people sing along and do so with fine devoutness... For the evil spirit is not at ease when one sings or preaches God's Word in true faith. He is a spirit of sadness and cannot stay where a heart is spiritually joyful (that is, joyful in God and His Word)."***

And with music, we can take the message of Jesus to many more people. How many already know the tune of "Amazing Grace"?

Well, now we can explain that to them. How many know “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing”? Well, now we can tell them why they sing, and why we sing. How many know “Go Tell It on the Mountain?” Well, now we can go tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and everywhere... that Jesus Christ is the Lord.

Dear friends in Christ, whether we sing beautifully or wretchedly is of no consequence... the fact that we are singing God’s praises is what matters. Just like whether we are perfect evangelists or not-so-good evangelists is of no consequence... that fact that people are hearing the Word of God is what is truly important.

This weekend is Cantate Sunday... it is “Sing” Sunday. Yet, I do not think it focuses only on the songs. I think that each and every one of us can “sing” the Lord’s songs constantly. We can sing the sweet song of repentance and salvation in Jesus’ name

when we talk about Him. We can sing the great song of God’s grace and mercy. We can sing the song of love and forgiveness that only God can offer to us. I hope that we can each walk away today, not afraid of who might hear our song; rather, I hope that we can walk away and sing... sing because Jesus loves us and has given His life for each and every one of us, and for every one else out there.

Thanks be to God for loving me and for being my Savior. Thanks be to God for giving me His Son, the perfect song of salvation. And thanks be to God for allowing me to *Sing to the Lord*... for everything that He has done.

Thanks be to God. Amen.