

Sing Praise Unto the Lord

“Praise the LORD!
Sing to the LORD a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the faithful.
Let Israel be glad in its Maker;
let the children of Zion rejoice in their King.
Let them praise his name with dancing,
making melody to him with tambourine and lyre.
For the LORD takes pleasure in his people;
he adorns the humble with victory.
Let the faithful exult in glory;
let them sing for joy on their couches.”
~Psalm 149:1-5

The people of God have often sung songs to the Lord, thus expressing their faith.



I'm thinking about the power of songs in our individual and corporate lives. I'm thinking about the power of the brain to remember songs, even when we might forget the periodic table we learned in high school chemistry class. What songs or hymns have brought you closer to God? What songs are still seared into your memory banks?

I was confirmed at Grace Lutheran Church in Ripon, Wisconsin. It was the tradition that the confirmation class would choose a “Confirmation Hymn.” Our class chose the strong classic, “Lead On, O King Eternal.” I still have a memory of marching out of that sanctuary on my confirmation day while my fellow confirmands and the whole congregation belted out that hymn (#550 from the old, red Service Book and Hymnal). It is a feeling of strength and confidence. It is a feeling that I'm not alone.



Verse 1 of that hymn seems kind of militaristic ending with, “We lift our battle song.” But, looking at verse 2, we see the fuller context of our battle. “For not with swords loud clashing, Nor roll of stirring drums, But deeds of love and mercy, The heavenly kingdom comes.”

There it is. Human instincts want to fight and stake their hopes on the power of the sword or the more muscular manifestations of power. Or, perhaps today, the allure of power is to pay attention to the loudest voice or to the one with the ability to win an argument in a world polarized. We are so quick to speak, but not so quick to listen.

Does our world need more loud and angry voices, or does our world need more deeds of love and mercy?



Verse 3 of “Lead On, O King Eternal” proclaims that “Thy Cross is lifted o'er us; We journey in its light.”

When my mind fades and good memory slips away, I suspect I will remember the words of my confirmation hymn. I pray that then and now my life might be marked by the power of the cross of Christ which beckons me to deeds of love and mercy. And the greatest mercy is that God loves me, a sinner in need of redeeming. That is something worth singing and dancing about!

Pastor Jim Duchring
Assistant to the Bishop/DEM