

Sing a New Song

Psalm 8

Crossroads Christian Church

Psalm 96

May 22, 2016 Pentecost 1 C

The book of Psalms, in addition to being the great fountain source of our hymns, is a favorite because it is, maybe, the most human book in the Bible. It runs the gamut of human feelings—from the depths (Ps 130) to the heights (psalm 150). The Psalms are honest to God in their feelings—fear, pain, anger, hurt, resentment, as well as more positive emotions. It reflects our moments of peace and calm, and our anxiety at knowing we are far from what God wants of us. David's feelings, after he sinned with Bathsheba, are reflected in Psalm 51. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy

blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." (vs. 1-2) A hymn that reflects the same truth, that God forgives us, is "Come Ye Disconsolate."

Sing: Come Ye Disconsolate, CH 502, v. 1

The Psalms stretch our souls by reflecting our sense of awe and wonder. They help us see God's glory in creation. Anyone who has thrilled to the beauty of a starry night, or perceived God's handiwork in the face of a newborn baby can relate to Psalm 8, which we shared earlier. It starts, "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" A new song that picks up the theme is "How Majestic is Thy Name," number 63.

Sing: How Majestic is Thy Name CH 63

The Psalms help us put our lives in perspectives. They help us realize that we aren't at the center of things, but God is. Just as Psalm 8 wonders how God can love us when we are so small by comparison to the heavens, Psalm 90 reminds us of how small we are in the great, rolling sea of time. Here's the beginning of Psalm 90. "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth,

or ever you had formed the earth and the world,

from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You turn us back to dust,

and say, "Turn back, you mortals." For a thousand years in your sight

are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night." "O God,

Our Help in Ages Past" is based on Psalm 90.

Sing: "O God, Our Help" (vss. 11,3,4) CH 67

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." The Psalms reflect our deepest yearnings for God's

presence in our lives. They speak of life as a barren desert without God's presence. We hunger and thirst for God, and then find that God is there, that God sets a table before us. Psalm 42 says, "As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."

Sing: As the Deer Chalice Praise 108

We find protection and comfort, and are lifted up before God. Psalm 91 begins, "You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust."

One of our favorite contemporary hymns, "On Eagle's Wings," sets the rest of Psalm 91 to music. "On Eagle's Wings" Chalice Hymnal 77

Of course, if you ask people to name their favorite Psalm, most would say Psalm 23. "The Lord is my Shepherd." It was written by David, a Shepherd boy who grew up to shepherd a nation, but who knew that God was the only Good Shepherd. His descendent, Jesus of Nazareth, would say, "I am the Good Shepherd." Its message is simple: God is with us and God is for us. We can put our confidence in God, and God will protect us and watch over us. In that trust, let us sing our hymn of commitment, based on Psalm 23.

by Michael E. Dixon