



ONE VOICE

GIVE THANKS
TO THE LORD,
FOR HE IS GOOD;
HIS LOVE ENDURES
forever.

Churches: ♦Bethany ♦Immanuel ♦Lunder ♦Silver Lake ♦Winnebago

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From the Pastor's Desk

"Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing." Psalm 100:1



Years ago, Bonnie Kay, Daniel and I would travel to Mason City on a Sunday afternoon to listen to a concert by the Mason City Barbershop Chorus. The Barbershop chorus had around a hundred different guys singing harmony. Besides the whole chorus, a number of Quartets were featured, usually including a gold or silver medalist winner at the national Barbershop Chorus Convention. It was always amazing to hear all those voices lifted in song. It would set our feet tapping to the music and our hearts would sing. It was a wonderful afternoon.



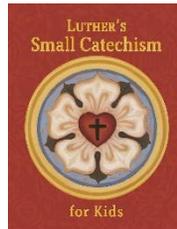
One year, about fifteen years ago or so, Bonnie Kay, Daniel and I were sitting in the Auditorium looking through the program at all the songs that would be sung and the listing of the different Quartets. We, like others, were in soft chatter discussing the program, beginning to get excited about the concert as the starting time drew near. Then the lights flashed a couple of times. It grew quiet. Then the lights were dimmed, but we could see and hear the chorus taking the stage. Then the lights were completely shut off and we sat in the darkness expectantly. The darkness was scattered by a bright spotlight shining on our Mike Hanson. Mike began singing, *"Just one voice Singing in the darkness. All it takes is one voice, Singing so they hear what's on your mind. And when you look around you'll find There's more than one voice Singing in the darkness"* ... Then the lights came up and the whole chorus joined in singing, *"Joining with your one voice, Each and every note or another octave, Hands are joined and fears unlocked."* It was a wonderful opening from Mike's clear one voice singing in the darkness being joined with a hundred voices just like the lyrics said. Both moments were amazing, Mike's solo beginning and all the voices joining together.

I was reminded of this moment of this concert as I thought about the Psalmist invitation to "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord. ...Let us come into his presence singing." When we come together to worship the Lord, it is one of the few times anymore that we sing in public. I know there are some Karaoke nights in some pubs that singing is very popular and a lot of fun for everyone. The person singing gets a chance to shine and the friends have fun listening to their friend belting out a song, even if they are out of tune. The Psalmist invites us to have this kind of joy. To lift up our voices to sing praises unto the Lord. Notice, the Psalmist says, let us make a "joyful noise" unto the Lord. This means that even if we sing off key and our voices are not the greatest voices, we can still sing with gusto, for the Lord will hear the song of praise from our heart. So as we join together, we can make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

As we enter into the month of November, our thoughts generally go to the Day of Thanksgiving. We think about the gathering of family, many whom we haven't seen in person for months or maybe even since last year. It is a time to catch up

and celebrate the joys and accomplishments of their life and a time to stand alongside them as they experience difficult times. Our imaginations can see the table filled with our favorite foods, we can almost smell the turkey, gravy, the stuffing, taste the sugar crunching in our bite of lefsa. We give thanks for the wonderful food and the time to be together.

Thanksgiving Day is also a time to pause to call to mind the many blessings the Lord has blessed us with through out the year. Sometimes, as we think of something to give thanks for, one or two events or people just jump out of our memory, and we give thanks to the Lord for those blessings. The wonderful thing about Thanksgiving, when we take a moment to think about God's blessing, it is much more than the one or two events or people that come to our mind at first. When we begin to ponder our blessings from the Lord, we begin to see God's fingerprints of love all over our lives every day. Every day, the Lord loves to bless you with joy, love and peace and much more. Martin Luther lists our Daily Bread from the Lord in the meaning of the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer. Our daily bread is *"everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farms, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, children and members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors and the like."* So we could give thanks to the Lord every day for the many blessings. The more we give thanks, the more our hearts are blessed as we become aware of all the blessings of love from our Lord.



I am reminded of Brother Lawrence, a monk who lived in the late 1300s. Brother Lawrence often worked in the kitchen. Brother Lawrence would keep singing and offering up prayers of thanksgiving all day as he worked in the kitchen. When asked why, Brother Lawrence said, "When we finish worshipping in the sanctuary and walk out, we don't leave God in the sanctuary. God is everywhere and so I continue to sing praises to God wherever I am for God is always present."

So we too can lift up our songs of praise and make a joyful noise unto the Lord wherever we find ourselves. It will be a blessing to us and to our Lord. But like the Barbershop concert, the one voice singing clear and joyfully was great, but joined together by hundreds of voices was fantastic. So let us also take time to gather together, to join all our voices together, to sing praises to the Lord, making a joyful noise unto the Lord. Then we will make the LORD smile.

Pastor Randy



WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



Thanksgiving is an interesting holiday. We stop ... and reflect ... and give thanks ... for our wellbeing, for our family, for our things ... and sometimes we even give thanks for our God. That was not a typo (something a commonly do), but it was intentional. I did not say “we thanks to our God” but “give thanks for our God.”

Saying thank you keeps a channel of love open. When we write a “thank you” note, we are in effect saying not only that we are thankful “for”, but thankful “to” as well. This relationship is important to us and we want to keep that relationship alive and healthy.

This is why expressing our appreciation “for” God is so important. Thanksgiving and praise are among the most effective means of keeping open the channels of communication, the wellsprings of relationship between ourselves and God.

There were once two brothers who owned adjoining farms, and these two brothers worked together planting their crops and working their fields. Each year when the harvest was finished, the two brothers would divide the grain equally between the two, regardless of which farm may have produced the most crops.

During this particular harvest, the older brother said to himself, “My brother has a wife and family, and he will need more grain than I do. It’s not right that I should have as much of the grain with only myself to care for.” So after the sun set and in the cover of darkness, he took a bushel basket full of grain out of his bin and sneaked over to his brother’s barn and poured it out over his brother’s grain.

That same night, the younger brother talked with his wife and said, “My brother is alone without wife or family. I have children who will care for me in my old age while he has no one. It is not right that I should have so much of grain when I have a family to help me out.” So that very same night, after the sun set and in the cover of darkness, he took a bushel basket full of grain out of his bin and sneaked over to his brother’s barn and dumped it in with his brother’s grain.

This ritual took place every night for over a month, with each brother attempting to help the other. And as each brother looked at his own bin, he could not figure out why his bin looked just as full as when the harvest was over, while his brother’s bin never seemed to get any fuller.



Then one moonlit night, the inevitable happened. As the two brothers were making their nightly trek, they ran into each other on the path between their homes. At first they simply stopped and stared at one another in disbelief. Then, as they each realized what had been going on, they dropped their baskets and began to laugh. In the dim of the night, the two brothers embraced as they then began to cry, because each experienced the great love that the other had for him.

Of course, the most effective way of expressing our gratitude to God is to pass His blessings to someone else.

A man was on vacation with his son’s family at a rented cottage on the New England seashore. On the first day of his vacation, he was out in the yard digging a hole. He was putting out a small plant. As his son observed this strenuous work, he asked his Dad why he was going to such effort to put out a plant when this was not even their cottage. They would not even be returning the next year. The father replied, “Somebody will be here.”

“What kind of plant is it?” the son asked.

“A century plant,” his father replied.

“A century plant? You mean it won’t bloom for a hundred years?” the son asked.

“Not that long,” the father explained, “Maybe twenty or thirty years.”

The son was astonished. “Why in the world would you come out on this hot morning on your vacation in a rented cottage to put out a plant that won’t even bloom for twenty years?”

The father paused and looked up at his son. “I saw one the other day, and realized that someone twenty or thirty years ago wanted to share it with me. And so he planted it for my enjoyment. Some day, I said to myself, I’m going to plant one so that people will enjoy it after I’m gone. And that’s what I’m doing this morning.

How is the best way to say thank you? It is to pass on our blessings to others. It happens in families all the time. How do we express our gratitude to our parents for the sacrifices they have made in our behalf? We tell them we love them, of course. And we show them our respect. But essentially the most important step is to be good parents ourselves.

So it is in our heavenly family. We pass on what we have received.

Wanderings and Wonderings, Pastor Bill Peters

