

Psalm 98:1-9 Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. ² The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. ³ He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. ⁴ Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! ⁵ Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody! ⁶ With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD! ⁷ Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! ⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together ⁹ before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

Psalm 98. It is the psalm assigned for this week. We read it not long ago responsively in the service as our Psalmody. It is the text I chose for the sermon on this, the sixth week in Easter. So you would probably like to know a little more about the Psalm. You would probably like to know who wrote it and when it was written. Well, so would I. Some say it was written right after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. Others say it was written in King David's time. Others say it was written while the Israelites were in exile in Babylon. Still others say it was written when they came back from exile. Yes, in my studying this week, I found reputable scholars that place this Psalm in almost every possible biblical setting. And while at first this frustrated me, I eventually came to a conclusion that brought relief from that frustration. That conclusion doesn't answer the question of who wrote this Psalm or when it was written, but does allow us to meditate properly upon the Psalm today. That conclusion was this: Psalm 98 could have been written any time in Israel's history. It could have been written today. Because this Psalm's thrust is this: We have a predictable praiseable God. And that was true in the exodus and in the exile, true from yesteryear to yesterday.

But what do I mean when I say that we have a predictable God? After all, don't we usually talk about God's mysterious ways? Don't we say that his thoughts are not our thoughts? Doesn't the Bible say his paths are unsearchable? So how is it that I can call him predictable?

Well, this Psalm is quite clear that God has come in the past to save his people. It is equally clear that God will come again one day as a judge to save his people. Yes, in this way, our God is very predictable. He always, always, always comes to save his people. It is what he used to do. It is what he will do. And it is what he does even today here in this place.

And that is what ultimately makes our God a praiseable God. Yes I know praiseable isn't technically a word. But it is a good description of our God. He is in every way worthy of our praise. He is worthy of praise because he is our Creator. He is worthy of praise just simply because he is God. But particularly, he is worthy of our praise because of his predictable saving ways.

He is the God who saved Israel from the bondage in Egypt. He is the God that saved you and me by sending his Son to die on the cross. He is the God that will come again one day to save his people on the Last Day. Yes he is a predictable praiseable God.

Almost every translation of the bible translates the first verse of Psalm 98 in the very familiar way, "Sing unto the Lord a new song." But the word which is actually used doesn't mean so much new as renewed. Yes, the Psalmist encourages us to sing to the Lord a renewed song. And why is this important? Why even mention it?

Well, I mention it because it reminds us that the song we sing is not new in every way. It is not new because we have a predictable praiseable God that has saved his people throughout the generations. The song of praise we sing is the same song that the Israelites crooned as they walked step by step across the dry ground separating the Red Sea. It is the song that the Israelites shouted as they scampered over the fallen walls of Jericho. And it was the song piping out of the empty tomb in Easter Sunday morning. And no doubt, when Jesus returns with all his angels on that Last Day, it will be the song that will roar forth from those angel's mouths.

Yes, the song we are called to sing this morning is the song of our predictable praiseable God. And it is a renewed song. It is a song that has been sung throughout the ages by God's people. And yet, it is a song that we are to sing in our age with renewed vigor, not only knowing of our God's past works of salvation, but having experienced his present works of salvation in water, words, bread and wine, and trusting in his future work of bringing salvation to completion on that Last Day. We don't just sing the song our fathers and mothers in the faith sang simply because they sang it. We sing it because we know the same predictable praiseable God that they knew ages ago.

And indeed knowing him, we should sing this song with vigor at all times. But we must admit that we do not always do so. And when we realize that, we must also confess it to our God.

Whenever someone learns a new song that they really like, they can't wait to hear it. When it comes on the radio in the car when they are all by themselves, they sing it out loud. When they are walking down the street, they hum it. But inevitably after a while, the song begins to fall off of their lips. It no longer moves them like it used to. Sometimes, they don't want to hear it at all.

For many of us, the song of salvation is one we have known our whole lives. But perhaps, with that being true, we no longer sing it with enthusiasm. We assume salvation rather than celebrate it. We take it for granted rather than claiming it for joy.

And if this is true for you today, the call to sing a renewed song unto the Lord is not simply a call to sing the song that God's people sang long ago, but it is also a call to you to sing the song of salvation that once was your favorite song, to sing it again, and to sing it with renewed fervor.

Perhaps you have sat through 6 weeks of Easter with all of its "hallelujahs" and its "he is risen" and still aren't truly singing for joy in your heart. Perhaps the story of salvation that we have been celebrating seems to you like an old song you used to get you excited but no longer grabs your attention. If so, know that the call to sing a renewed song is for you.

And know that can only happen through two things. First, the fact that the song of salvation has grown old for you must be confessed to God. We must ask as the Psalmist asked elsewhere that God would restore unto us the joy of our salvation.

And when we confess our lack of joy, God has promised to give to us his joy by giving to us again his very real salvation. And having experienced his salvation again, the song of salvation will become fresh to us and so we will begin to sing. And as we sing, the whole world will watch. And as they hear the people of God sing about their predictable praiseable God, they too will be drawn to the song of salvation and to its savior Jesus.

And as God works faith in the hearts of those who hear, they will join God's people in singing that song which is the song of all of God's people and the song of all creation. God's people, his rivers, his hills, and

everything that is his will join together to sing unto the Lord a renewed song. We will proclaim together that God's right hand and holy arm have worked salvation for him and for us.

I don't know who wrote Psalm 98. I don't know when it was written. But maybe that doesn't matter. I don't know each of you deep down to your inmost thoughts. And I don't know what history will be written in your life tomorrow.

You see those things are true regardless of where we are in our lives, and perhaps they are particularly true this day for our seniors as they graduate high school.

At this point, four years of the familiarities of high school now give way to the unknown future. We don't know exactly what God has planned for each of them. They don't even know. But we know this. Whenever they end up, whatever they end up doing, we rejoice that they have a song to sing. And we rejoice that they have a song to sing because they have a predictable praiseable God that always, always, always comes to save his people.

This is true for those graduating from high school today. And it is true for you and me. Whoever you are deep down and whatever tomorrow brings, Psalms is for you. Sing unto the Lord a renewed song. Know that your God is predictable praiseable God who came to save you on the cross and at the empty tomb. And allow that truth to restore to you the joy of your salvation and open your mouth to sing. Amen