

Sing A New Song Unto The Lord.

Text: Psalm 98:1-2

Suggested Hymns:

423, 262, 249, 159, 464

- 1) It is a most beautiful song
- 2) It is the song of a renewed spirit
- 3) It is a pilgrim song
- 4) It will be sung throughout eternity

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Psalm 98:1-2, ¹ *Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.* ² *The LORD has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Our heavenly Father has showered us with many blessings. Not only have we received priceless spiritual gifts — forgiveness of sins, life and salvation — but we have also been given many material tokens of His love.

We all have more of everything than we need. A woman may have a wardrobe crammed with clothes and still insist that she hasn't a thing to wear, because her dresses are no longer new. A man's car may still function very well, but he insists on buying a new car, even if it means going into debt

This applies also to our tastes in the entertainment field. For a brief time a new hit song is all the rage. You hear it wherever you go. But few such songs have any enduring value. In a short time they are superseded by different ones, and the popular fancy turns to new songs.

The craving for something new is not wrong in itself. If it were not for the desire to improve what we have, we would still light our homes with torches and candles, and we would still travel on horse-back or on foot. It is the abuse of our abundance of goods that is wrong.

Today is Cantate Sunday. Cantate means SING! We are to offer the praise of our lips to the Triune God from whom all blessings flow. Our text for today admonishes us, *Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!* This appeal does not mean

that the Holy Spirit endorses our craving for novelty. Rather, here we have a reference to something as old as the world and yet as new as tomorrow. May this same Holy Spirit guide us as we ponder His invitation, *Sing a New Song to the Lord*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. It Is A Most Beautiful Song

The song of which I am to tell you today is so very beautiful that angels listen to it and God Himself graciously bends down from above to hear it. Nor is it difficult to sing this song. Those who aspire to sing with the great opera companies must spend many weary months, and even years, in order to perfect their talent so that they may obtain an audition, and even then they are not at all sure that they will be accepted.

But this new song is of such a nature that also little children can sing it. No musical skill is needed to learn the notes. Even the quavering voices of aged and infirm people can render it perfectly.

At the same time this new song is of such a nature that some people who have beautiful voices, so that they are the most popular in the world, and are acclaimed everywhere, so that large crowds of people flock to hear them, may still not be able to sing this song at all.

2. It Is The Song Of A Renewed Spirit

Immediately after the hymn after the sermon we sing the offertory. It is so familiar that we no longer have to look at our Order of Services. The offertory in our Communion Service begins with the words, "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*" Have you ever thought about these words seriously?

We ask God to create a clean heart within us. God alone is the Creator, and God alone is able to change our vile and sinful hearts over into the clean hearts that He wants. By nature our spirit, that is, our soul, is inclined only to that which is evil, but we ask God to renew a right spirit within us, a spirit which is pleasing to Him.

When God has therefore created a new heart within us and renewed a right spirit within us, then, and then only, are we able to sing the new song of which our text is speaking.

Some of us may have old hearts, and some have new hearts. In our text the old heart is hard and stony, godless and impure. The new heart is tender and pure and Christ-like. Christ takes away the old hard heart and gives us a new one. This is purely and solely an act of God's grace. We have in no way deserved that He should do this for us. It was achieved for us and made possible for us because of the redemption which Christ wrought with His precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.

When we speak of a new song, we do not mean that it is literally new in the sense that it has never before been heard. In the case of our text, which is taken from the Book of Psalms, we have a song which is several thousand years old.

Yet if it is sung by a person who has a clean heart and in whom the right spirit has been renewed, then it is filled with a new feeling and made into a new song. This Book of Psalms, this hymnbook of the Bible, abounds with thoughts similar to those which are expressed in the opening words of the Psalm 98, from which our text is taken.

For example, Psalm 95 begins with the words, ¹ *Oh come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.* ² *Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.*

likewise, Psalm 96 begins with the words, ¹ *Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth.* ² *Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.* ³ *Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.* ⁴ *For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.* ⁵ *For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens.* Similar expressions abound in the Psalms as well as in other books of Scripture.

One of the great blessings of the Reformation is the hymnbook which you have. We take it for granted that a large part of public worship is taken up by the singing of the congregation. Some people are so accustomed to this blessing that they are indifferent to it and take no real part in the singing at all.

Yet in Luther's time, singing by the congregation was practically unheard of in the Roman Catholic Church. There was no such thing as a Roman Catholic hymnal. Luther published the first hymnal in the language of the day, composing some of the music and writing many of the hymns personally.

Make it a point to sing heartily and with real joy to the praise of God and to your own edification. It does not matter if your voice is not trained. God accepts even our most feeble efforts as long as we sing unto Him with a clean heart and with a right spirit renewed within us.

We sing unto the Lord with a heart filled with love for Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us as a Ransom for our souls. How can we possibly comprehend our Lord's love for us, a love so great that He took upon Himself the burden of our sins and nailed them to the cross and buried them forever in His tomb! If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, and only such a new creature can sing this new song.

3. It Is A Pilgrim Song

One of our hymns begins with the words, "*A pilgrim and a stranger, I journey here below; Far distant is my country, The home to which I go.*"¹ In one sense of the word, all people living on the face of the whole earth are such pilgrims. All people are walking along life's way, or rather along life's ways. There are only two ways on which different people are walking through this world to eternity.

The one is the old and broad way; the other is the new and narrow way. Those who do not have a new heart and do not have a right spirit renewed within them are going the old way. But those who have this new heart and this renewed spirit are walking on the new way. The old way leads down to eternal damnation; the new way leads up to eternal salvation with God.

The new way was made possible by Christ. By nature no one knew which way to go, and consequently all people willingly wandered on the broad way to death. God endowed human beings with a conscience, and their conscience told the people that the broad way would lead to everlasting destruction.

In order to avoid this dreadful fate, they tried to find the new way which leads directly to God. They sought it diligently and tried to locate it in many different places. Always the natural feeling was that the only way that we can reach God would be by making sacrifices, some of them quite terrible and horrible. For example by self-torture, by sacrificing their children, by entering a cloister or by becoming hermits, etc. In other words, that they would have to earn their way to heaven, something which is utterly impossible.

The Bible says that we are saved by grace, not of works, lest any man should boast. We confess in the explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed: *"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him."*

In His infinite love Jesus came down from heaven to prepare the way for us and to show us how to walk upon it, and to walk with us and guide us and uphold us as we go through life, where we meet with so many obstacles and dangers. It is a very costly way. Not only did Jesus have to give up the joys of heaven in order to take upon Himself our flesh and blood, but it cost Him His very life to prepare this new way for us. But He made it. It is long, uphill, and narrow, but it is a royal road and leads straight to God.

Those who travel along this road SING as they go. And well they may, for every step is taking them further away from sin and destruction, and nearer to God. They are treading in the footsteps of Jesus, guided by Him. Nor do we walk alone with Jesus on this road. We are accompanied by the followers of Christ down through the ages.

We sometimes have to make apologies for the words and actions of our worldly-minded friends, but we never have to apologise for the company we keep on our way to heaven. And since all those who believe in Jesus Christ as their saviour from sin are on their way to heaven, it is no wonder that they sing as they walk, even under the greatest handicaps and in the darkest places. For with Christ enlightening our spirits, we can see our Fatherland afar off.

We can taste and feel that the Lord is good. We know that as our text says, *His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.* Isn't it a wonderful thing that *The LORD has made known His salvation?* Shouldn't we be truly grateful to the Lord because we have the Bible in our possession so that we can read in the privacy of our homes and in our family circles? We can learn about the wonderful deeds of God which He wrought for our salvation.

However, we need to remember that there are still several countries today which not only hinder public worship, but also persecute Christians.

Years ago in Russia, no instruction in the Christian religion was to be given to a person who was less than 18 years old. By that time many of the Russian youth was so hardened and been so indoctrinated against everything that is sacred

and holy that very few availed themselves of the opportunity to learn about Christ later in life. Remember that nobody can sing this new song as long as they have never learned to walk on the new way with a renewed heart and mind.

4. It Will Be Sung Throughout Eternity

The straight and narrow path which Christ has prepared for us, and on which He makes it possible for us to walk is through the gracious operation of His Holy Spirit, who leads to our new and eternal home in heaven.

Here on earth a happy home is one of God's most priceless gifts. If we are so fortunate as to live in such a home, we hurry to it as soon as our daily work is done.

Have you ever noticed how joy permeates an entire home when someone sings a song, when the housewife or the children sing happily while they go about their household tasks, or when the entire family gathers around a piano or an organ and joins in the singing of our beautiful hymns?

Just think what it will be like in heaven where all the saints and angels together will sing in the most beautiful harmony, in melodies unknown on earth and unknowable because they are so grand and so wonderful, singing with joy in their hearts unto the Lord!

But I must remind you of one thing, and that is that the new song will be sung in heaven only by those who have learned to sing it here, by those whose hearts have been made new on earth and who have travelled to heaven by the new way, hand in hand with Christ, their Saviour and Redeemer.

Also note that those who are on their way to perdition are not necessarily living in great shame and vice here on earth. Often they are kind and considerate in their dealings; good and faithful neighbours; dependable employees; men and women of high moral character. When you think about them, it is hard to realise that all their righteousnesses are as filthy rags in God's sight.

It is so difficult for many people to understand that whatever is not of faith is sin, and that without faith it is impossible to please God. Without faith it is also impossible to sing the new song of the redeemed.

How urgently, then, should we as workers together with God plead with these people to be reconciled with God; that now is the accepted time; now is the

day of salvation! Now, in this life, they must learn the old yet ever new song which confesses that we are saved by grace, through faith; not of works, lest any man should boast.

May God in His mercy grant us the grace that we may be instrumental in bringing many souls to Him, souls that will join us in heaven to sing unto the Lord a new song, for He has done marvellous things. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Hymn 480