

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Psalms 96:1-4 (ESV) ¹Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! ²Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. ³Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! ⁴For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised.

The most important thoughts you will ever have are thoughts of God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reign supreme. There is no one over them for they are over all. God is above all. When people deny God his proper place in their lives, they are missing out on why they were created. You came into this world to know God and enjoy God forever. There is no one higher than God. Therefore, when your view of God is shallow, irreverent, less than what the Bible teaches, you are robbing from yourself what life is all about. Paul says, to live is Christ. Every person that is a true Christian has a mysterious connection and link to God. A better way of saying it is when you are born again, born anew, saved by grace through faith you have an invisible unity with God, so much so it is as if you died with Christ on the cross and rose to new life when Jesus arose from the dead. Your life is hidden in Christ. Jesus is your life. Jesus is your reason to live. Life only makes sense when we are in a close and personal relationship with Jesus. Outside of Christ, I do not know why people even get out of bed. We are all religious people so those outside of Christ do their best to fill their void with other gods and today a huge idol is one's politics. People these days are willing to fight to the death for their political cause as if politics could solve the evils of our day. Often politics are the evil of our day. Seattle, Portland, Kenosha, and other cities across the nation have been on fire this summer due to people's political points of view. Protests that do no harm are good and right. Protests that lead to violence and destruction of people and property do no good at all and harm the causes of those trying to protest safely and with respect. We have people in this church who have marched in peaceful protests and more power to you.

¹Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! ²Sing to the Lord, bless his name. Friends I work so very hard on my sermons. I spend hours studying and pouring myself into what I preach. I truly believe preaching God's Word is my most important responsibility as your pastor. To me there is nothing more important than speaking forth God's Word in a way that personally applies to our lives. It is my mission in life. This is what I hear when I think a particular sermon was above average. "Pastor, thank you for the first hymn we sang today." I go so much out of it. "Pastor, the reason I joined this church is because my first Sunday here we sang the hymn, "How Great Thou Art" and I felt right at home. "We sang that song at my father's funeral." One person said, "Pastor, I felt God's presence so strongly during a particular hymn." Often when I am told this, there are tears in the eyes of the person speaking. I want to scream, "What about my sermon? I think it is the best one of I have ever preached. What do you do go to sleep when I am preaching?" What's wrong with you anyway?

The real question is what's wrong with the pastor for not acknowledging how important singing unto the Lord truly is. The Bible says, "¹Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! ²Sing to the Lord, bless his name;" The Bible says, "God inhabits the praises of his people." When we sing unto the Lord, we are singing to an audience of one, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Your very words are heard in the Throne Room of God. God does not need to hear how great God is. He already knows. We add nothing to his glory. When we sing unto the Lord how great God is, we are all reminded of the great God we have come to know. There are no higher thoughts than thoughts about God and when we sing truth unto God, that same truth builds us up. Our minds are filled with thoughts of God. Your soul craves the very Presence of God. In song our voices enter the very Presence of God and our connection to God is strengthened God inhabits the praises of his people.

It honestly bothers me when I look at the congregation during the music and see a person's mouth not moving. No one has ever had to tell me to move my mouth. It moves all

the time as you well know. I am sincerely asking all of us during times of singing to put your entire heart, soul, and mind into singing. Sometimes you may be so moved by God's Presence while singing that you may not be able to mouth the words, but the Lord hears the praises of your heart. Praising God builds up the person praising for your mind is dwelling on thoughts of God and there are no higher thoughts. Your soul craves God.

"tell of his salvation from day to day. ³Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!" Some of you in this church have the spiritual gift of evangelism. It is so easy for you to talk about the Christian faith even to a stranger. Others of you would not be caught dead speaking of the Christian faith even to your best friend. And most of us fall somewhere in between to that of being overly vocal and that of being mute. I was raised in a home where my parents spoke of their faith in Jesus, spoke about Jesus every day. My parents led scores of people to Jesus Christ. They were far from perfect but when it came to talking about Jesus you could not shut them up. Being raised in home as such I thought all Christians were as vocal as they are, but I have been proven wrong.

To you who are more on the quiet side I say this. God has uniquely gifted you with spiritual gifts and God has wired you with your personality. You may be on the quiet side but with God's giftedness and your God-given personality God has used you, is using you, and will use you according to the gifts God has given to you and your personality. You have other ways that speak about Jesus that are not as loud but just as important and significant as you show your love for Jesus by doing good works. God created you in Christ Jesus to do good works. This week someone fixed the leak in our chalice. This person may not have prayed with several police officers this week, but this person made it that during the words of institution the chalice will not leak all over the place. The person made it possible for God's word to be spoken without drips and we all benefit from the sacrament of Holy Communion.

I know in Christian love others of you bake, give rides, visit those in need, deliver beds and more, do meals on wheels, and a host of other things doing good works unto the Lord Jesus Christ including prison ministry and working the computer during worship. I just happen to be a big mouth but all of the parts in the body of Christ are equally important. My goal as a pastor is to help us all to be set free to keep serving the Lord Jesus Christ. One of our quieter persons has a message that is read by hundreds, if not thousands, every week on the church marquis.

I have to say this. Part of my calling is to speak to strangers and pray with strangers and share the Gospel with people upon seeing them. It is my reason to get up in the morning and is more important to me than Dunkin Donuts coffee, although at Dunkin Donuts I get the opportunity to pray with people frequently, people I will only meet once and I want to take advantage of that one time of prayer; I can do no other. I have to speak of God's salvation day by day. For me to be quiet is to waste a day and God is not honored by my silence. The mute button does not work. Others of you are just as important witnesses of Christ's salvation by your work of helps, praying for, and displaying love that only comes from knowing Jesus.

³Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! ⁴ I am deeply bothered by the shootings in South Chicago especially at the loss of life. Gun laws will not change what is happening there. It will take a change of heart for the area to improve. I ache over the pain of the families who have lost loved ones. One person, Terrance Wallace has decided to do something about it. He has become the guardian of several young people, at least 10, if not more, and moved them into a beautiful home in Barrington Hills. These are young people that if left in their danger zone would either end up dead, in prison, or stuck in a life with nowhere to go. They are now in a safe school district and Terrance is pouring the Gospel of Jesus Christ into their souls. Last spring or early summer I saw Terrance interviewed on the news. I took one look at him and my heart was filled with the love of God for this man

and his ministry. Shortly after the news report I forgot his name and the name of his ministry. I wanted to meet this man and have our church and myself support his ministry in any way possible. I felt linked to this guy, called of God to serve in any way possible. Three weeks ago, I had breakfast with a particular parishioner who told me about delivering beds to a particular home in Barrington Hills to a person who is guardian of several young people, moving them out of unsafe places. The man's name is Terrance Wallace and that is the person I have been dying to meet. Our church was already involved in serving that ministry and I am now the Johnny come lately.

Last week I took a risk and emailed Terrance knowing I might not ever hear back from him. He responded the next day sending me his phone number. While writing this sermon I felt an inner prompting to call him and he actually answered. I was almost speechless, emphasis on almost. Within a minute we were praying together and experiencing Christian fellowship. We spoke for just a few minutes and I tried hard to listen more than speak but did not succeed. Terrance and all of these young boys are black. He and I will meet sometime in these next couple of weeks and I am asking him to speak here and share his testimony. I would like to travel to Barrington Hills and speak to these young men about Christ, similar to what I do in confirmation, or put on a spiritual retreat for them. I definitely feel called by God to support this ministry in any way possible and our church has already begun the process through Love, Inc.

Friends, my heart burns to ³Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! ⁴For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised." We cannot solve the problems of the shootings in south Chicago, but we can in a small way support the ministry that is trying to make a difference by keeping these young people alive, out of jail, and at the very least not stuck in life. Let us pray to that end.