

*Sermon prepare on Exodus 15:1-21 by Jonathan Shradar*

Why do we sing? Have you ever given much thought to that question? I suppose we could start much more broadly and ask why do we do anything we do when we gather here on Sunday mornings... or why do we even gather together?! But the answer to all of it really is found in the question of why we sing...

I don't know how you have approached or thought about the music of a Christian church... the singing of the congregation... maybe you have seen it merely as "buffering" in two senses of the word... as a buffer between other elements of the service, a few extra minutes to arrive before you miss anything "important..." Then there is the Netflix sense of buffering... your time to download, to "strengthen the stream" so you can connect with God.

If not buffering, maybe it is simply tradition that has us vocalising week in and week out.

We must recognize how unique it is, that we sing. Other religions don't gather to hear preaching and respond with song. Most things you participate in don't bring people together to harmonize. It might even be a little weird if it is a newer environment to you.

Music though is vital to Christianity... it is all over Scripture and all through our history... conveying what is most important and who we are, why we are.

James Montgomery Boice - "Music is a gift from God that allows us to express our deepest heart responses to God and his truth in meaningful and memorable ways. It is a case of our hearts joining with our minds to say, 'Yes, Yes, Yes!' to the truths we are embracing."

In our text, the musical interlude in Exodus 15, we see the roots of our singing.

**The church sings to remember what God has done and will surely do.**

**Exodus 15:1-21** "Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying,

"I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;  
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

[2] The LORD is my strength and my song,  
and he has become my salvation;  
this is my God, and I will praise him,  
my father's God, and I will exalt him.

[3] The LORD is a man of war;  
the LORD is his name.

[4] "Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea,

and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea.

- [5] The floods covered them;  
they went down into the depths like a stone.
- [6] Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power,  
your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.
- [7] In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries;  
you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble.
- [8] At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up;  
the floods stood up in a heap;  
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.
- [9] The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake,  
I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.  
I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.'
- [10] You blew with your wind; the sea covered them;  
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

- [11] "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?  
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,  
awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?"

- [12] You stretched out your right hand;  
the earth swallowed them.

- [13] "You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed;  
you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.

- [14] The peoples have heard; they tremble;  
pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia.

- [15] Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed;  
trembling seizes the leaders of Moab;  
all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.

- [16] Terror and dread fall upon them;  
because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone,  
till your people, O LORD, pass by,  
till the people pass by whom you have purchased.

- [17] You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain,  
the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode,  
the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.

- [18] The LORD will reign forever and ever."

[19] For when the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them, but the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea. [20] Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a

tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing.  
[21] And Miriam sang to them:

“Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;  
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.” (ESV)

Some commentators think that maybe this song is misplaced... that is is wrongly inserted and interrupts the narrative of the Exodus of God’s people. But it is meant to be right where it is in the redemptive story of Scripture because it rightly shows how God’s people are to respond to what he does.

“Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song...”

**Exodus 14:30-31** “Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. [31] Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses. (ESV)

Israel brought out of slavery, through miraculous signs, brought to a situation that seemed hopeless in the desert and God saved them, crossing the Red Sea and defeating the Egyptian army. It is their salvation.

Salvation always demands a response - a response of praise that is most suitably expressed in song! Salvation is what put the song into Israel’s heart. The Israelites were saved for the glory of God. The Song of Moses was their spontaneous, jubilant response to his grace.

Now, this song serves as a model for us, that we would sing in the same way, responding to what God has done.

Where modern attempts at praise can emphasize the individual, making the singer most important, it is who and what Moses’ Song is about that can help us see, and hear, why we sing.

They sing of, Who God is, What God has done, What God will do, and they sing Together.

**The church sings to remember what God has done and will surely do.**

### **1) Who God is**

When it comes to praise, the singing of the glory of another, it is good to know just who is receiving the praise. And having only been reintroduced to this God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob just before this amazing flourish of miraculous events, it is helpful not only for Israel to sing and memorialize the Lord but to make him known in the description of his character.

He is the eternal God... “I will sing to the LORD... Yahweh,” “Yahweh is his name.” This is the I AM... the God that exists... forever. Using his name gives him the exclusive exaltation in this song. Specific to this God that is the people’s strength, their salvation.

He is the powerful God. “Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power... shatters the enemy.” The magicians can’t match his power, the Egyptian idols, little gods, are crushed before him. A God that has the ability to deliver his promise to his people, sure, strong, unchallenged by his overthrown adversaries.

He is the God of justice. His fury consumes the enemy like stubble... This is his wrath. This is not one of his attributes that we often rally around... That there are those that will meet their demise by a blast of his nostrils... but this is what Israel sings of. This is worthy of praise because in his wrath we see justice. That evil will be dealt with, the oppressor will be crushed.

He is supreme... “Who is like Yahweh? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?” There is none like him. He is holy and higher than all others and he reigns forever. This is the God that can be trusted and worshiped because the buck stops with him. All other deities fall short... they are created by man, He is the Creator of all. They are powerless beyond superstition, He tells the wind where to blow and moves all of creation with his word. They provided only burden to those that follow them, He grants justice.

And if that all is not enough, He is the God of love. He has led the people in his steadfast love. The love that covenanted with Abraham to make of his a people that would bless the whole world. Love that heard their cries in slavery. Love that came to free them and win the victory for them.

He really is this amazing God and the people can sing of his greatness because it is true, they have experienced it directly. They have witnessed his work. These attributes of his character are realized and revealed in his work of which they sing.

## **2) What God has done**

They sing to the LORD for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and rider he has thrown into the sea...”

This is immediately after the people saw the great power the Lord used against the Egyptians, in their belief in him, they are singing of this glorious redemption. Slavery is over, by his hand they are on the other side of the sea.

When the enemy said he would overtake them, destroy them... God sank Pharaoh’s army like lead in the mighty waters.

This song is their response to the exodus from Egypt. To redemption. To what God has done. He has saved the people, revealed his power and vanquished the enemy.

But the song is not only of who he is or what he has done... it also sings of what he will do.

### **3) What God will do**

This is praise on the way... They have experienced the beginning of covenant fulfillment - as they are being brought to the land that was Promised for them. A place to flourish, a place to be set apart, a place to worship the Lord.

Israel's words declare where they are headed. "The peoples have heard: they tremble." Other nations have heard of Yahweh's power... Philistia, Edom, Moab, Canaan... dread of their demise has fallen upon them. These are the people the Old, Old Story will encounter later as they stand in the way of the people moving into the land.

But the melody rightly proclaims what God will do, how he will bring the people he has "purchased" by his victory in Egypt, to where he will dwell with them. Planting Israel on his mountain, the sanctuary that his hands have established.

Their praise communicates their hope. That this promise-giving God can be trusted, because he has fought for them, he will surely bring them all the way home.

This Lord that will reign forever.

This is a good model for us, for our praise, declaring with joyous song who God is, what he has done and will surely do. It is a needed reminder for the people. This song will carry the faithful among them through difficulty and a generation in the wilderness... through the experience of owning the land and then losing it again. Through restoration... and future oppression. The God of this song remains the same. The redeeming, powerful, loving God. Who has done glorious things.

But let's not miss the fourth thing of this song that is to serve as a model for us.

### **4) Singing Together**

"Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD..." The congregation, the nation, all the people joined in this sing along for the glory of God.

Some of the language sounds personal... The Lord is MY strength... I will exalt him... but it is all in the public - corporate expression. Voices declaring who God is, what he has done and will do, in unison, together, communally.

As if we might miss that it was everyone, Miriam, the sister of Moses, a prophetess, leads the women, “all of the women” with a tambourine and dancing, singing this song. In a patriarchal era you wouldn’t need to mention the women... but this is important. Exaltation of Yahweh is for everyone... especially the women. They even get to step it up... The guys are the Presbyterians, and the ladies are the Charismatics! And its cool.

Everyone singing together. At the same time. Gathered to sing. Gathered to be reminded of who God is and what he has done. Gathered to firmly place their hope in what God will do.

“What an amazing God! He is eternal and omnipotent, holy and just, loving and faithful. If anyone wonders whether this song is of any practical use, simply ask this question: What kind of God do we really need? Without question, the kind of God we need is the kind of God Moses considered worthy of song. We need a God who will be with us always. We need a God who has the power to save us, to triumph over sin in our lives. We need a God of wrath, who will see to it that justice is done in the end. We need a God of everlasting love, who will take us home to live with him forever. The God of Moses is everything that anyone could ever need or even want in a God.” - Ryken

And he is ours in Jesus.

This is a song for all of us. And we will sing it with all of the redeemed of God... all who believe and overcome by the power of Christ.

**Revelation 15:2-4** “And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. [3] And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

“Great and amazing are your deeds,  
O Lord God the Almighty!  
Just and true are your ways,  
O King of the nations!  
[4] Who will not fear, O Lord,  
and glorify your name?  
For you alone are holy.  
All nations will come  
and worship you,  
for your righteous acts have been revealed.” (ESV)

This is a song that we can sing of Jesus...

Sing of Who he is - He is no mere moral teacher... He is the I AM... before Abraham was he was... The Son of God... in the flesh. The lamb of God provided for the people to save them. Powerful to save.

What better place to get our lyrics than from Scripture!

**Colossians 1:15-20** “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. [16] For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. [17] And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. [18] And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. [19] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, [20] and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” (ESV)

Sing of What he has done - He took on the brokenness and sin of humanity and faced the justice of God for it. He took our place and shed his blood to establish a new covenant with us for redemption, life... eternity.

**Philippians 2:8-11** “And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (ESV)

Sing of what He will do - He will fully and finally deliver his people. He will sanctify those that believe in him - he will bring us all the way home to dwell with him.

He is the LORD that will reign forever.

**Revelation 11:15** “Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” (ESV)

**The church sings to remember what God has done and will surely do.**

The Christian life is a musical... Sing of the goodness of God, the fullness of Christ, is everywhere in Scripture, it is the response to the grace we have been given in Jesus, that we can't help but sing.

Having a young couple live with us (Ben & Rachele) and warning them that we lived a musical... that we might break into song. They didn't know what we meant until our first dinner together when the Shradars broke out in song!

We should give people the same warning! This is exactly what our lives are like in Christ, sing to be reminded, to proclaim his goodness. In every corner of our lives, singing of Jesus. Singing to the LORD for he has triumphed gloriously.

*Response:* At the singing of the Song of Moses what are we to do, how are we to be formed by it?

**See Jesus** - Hear what we sing about, his grace, his victory over death on the cross and in his resurrection. His love for us... believe in him, his redeeming work. Turn to him, humble yourself before him. Let our songs increase your belief, to strengthen your resolve... to give you confidence and hope in Jesus. Seeing him in all his fullness.

“And the duty of singing praises to God, seems to be appointed wholly to excite and express religious affections.” - Jonathan Edwards

**Sing Along** - Join in. Value the body that we can sing together and be reminded of what Jesus has done and will surely do for his glory and our good. We are meant for each other, for each others' voices... The NT does not delete our need for one another, it solidifies it, emboldens it.

**Colossians 3:15-17** “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. [16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. [17] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (ESV)

Maybe the Lord will use our singing to bring others to himself... to give them a song of his redeeming work, his power, his supremacy and love.

“Every day God is bringing more and more children into his holy dwelling. Soon all God's people will be there to sing the song that will never end... the LORD will reign forever.”

**The church sings to remember what God has done and will surely do.**

**Close:** In 1792 a group of settlers traveled to Africa - more than a thousand of them, all of African descent. Some had been slaves on American plantations, others soldiers in the British army having lived in Canada. Together they set out to resettle what is now Sierra Leone, on land purchased as Province of Freedom.

The settlers were all professing Christians and when they reached Africa, they marched ashore singing a hymn by William Hammond, “Awake, and Sing the Song”:

Awake, and sing the song  
Of Moses and the Lamb!  
Wake every heart and tongue,

To praise the Saviour's name...  
Sing on your heavenly way!  
Ye Ransomed sinners, sing!  
Sing on, rejoicing every day  
In Christ, the eternal King!

It was an appropriate hymn to sing. They had been released from captivity, they had crossed the sea, and now they were entering the Promised Land. They sang of Moses and Israel being brought out of Egypt, and they sang of Jesus, who had set them free and given them new life.

The church that sings lives like these singing settlers. Coming into a new land, because of what Jesus has done... this is for us.

“I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. [2] The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.”

Shall we be a singing people?!