

Psalms For All Seasons: Sing, Sing, Sing

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome here for this Sunday, August 20th. Time is flying by. Every time I write a sermon and write the date and think about the date and think about the time that's passed and the things that have passed and the things that are coming and, wow.

Do you ever feel like that? Like you're a rock in the middle of a stream that's just rushing by you? Sometimes I feel that way. My name is Kent Dixon and it is my absolute joy to be the pastor here. And welcome to each of you this morning, whether you're here this morning in person. People listen to our sermons on the website or on our podcast that's available through Apple Podcasts and iTunes and places like that.

And one of these days I will actually, I love looking at the stats from that and I'll bring them sometime and share a couple of slides. You would not believe where people listen to us, to our service, to our sermon from all over the world.

And I think I've mentioned it before, but a large percentage in Canada, not shockingly, large percentage in the US, lots in Germany every week, which is crazy.

[1 : 1 2] Lots in other places that just boggle my mind. So God is at work and God is using me and using what his word is being proclaimed here to people who are faithfully tuning in that we've never seen and never met.

So welcome here this morning. It's good to see all of you. This morning we're continuing in our sermon series called Psalms for All Seasons. And if you're thinking, when will this ever end? This is the penultimate episode. So this is second last. And next week I'll be wrapping that up. I've seen a few people shaking their heads thinking, oh, don't wrap it up.

We'll come back to the Psalms again one day. We've been learning that the book of Psalms is a book for all seasons. And you've seen, you've heard me say that and you see it on the screen. So this morning we're going to talk a bit about singing, not surprisingly. And we've already done quite a bit of that together this morning. And sometimes Leah and I talk about what songs we're going to use.

[2 : 1 4] Sometimes she just says, sometimes God just shows up. And you've heard us talk about, marvel about that, that God will put something in her head that resonates with something I say, that he just kind of goes, God just laughs and says, see what I did there?

Did you notice? God winks at us. Have you ever really stopped to think about singing as an activity? Like lots of you are maybe thinking, I never do it and I don't want to get caught doing it.

So I don't even want to talk about it. Well, I don't play any instruments really, but I thrive on music and singing. And you've heard me say that before, that I tend to have music playing a lot.

And I have a very broad and eclectic taste in music, except for country. So I listen to music any chance I can get, really. And it brings me joy.

It really does bring me a ton of joy. And I also love to sing. And so sometimes that's goofy improvisational singing that I do at home, which is frankly no one's business.

[3 : 1 7] But I'll do it at home and it brings Michelle joy. She chuckles. But I've also sung in choirs. I've sung in choirs and I've been blessed by that. And I love to sing in the presence of God with God's people.

That's something that brings me a great deal of joy as well. And so singing is pretty amazing when you think about it. I don't know if you've ever thought about it, but we'll do that a bit this morning. Because from a technical perspective, largely without even thinking about it, humans are able to push air up through their throat, which I'm also doing right now in a different way, past our vocal cords, which are essentially just kind of, this is gross, but fleshy membranes that vibrate at different speeds.

That's the technical aspect of singing or speaking, is our vocal cords and how they work. We can change the pitch of the sound we're producing, which I'm even doing as I modulate my voice. And I'm just doing that naturally. But we seem to also intuitively know how to do that. Have you ever thought about that? And we, all the time, while we're talking or singing or whatever it is we're doing, we're moving our mouths and our lips and our tongues to form words and sounds while we're doing that.

And we learn, right? We're taught how to do some of these things, but so much of it is just natural and intuitive for us. So let's get right into this. The word sing, and we're gonna go right into scripture, appears in the Bible more than 400 times.

[4 : 48] To think it's important to God. And there are at least 50 commands to us to sing in scripture. At least 50 in some way or another. And the Bible tells us what I could find.

Specifically, the Bible tells us to sing to the Lord, which we've done this morning, at least 22 times. Very specific direction in that way. The book of Ephesians tells us in 519, don't worry about rushing there, speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music with your heart to the Lord.

In Psalm 40, verse 3, King David says, he put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord, David says.

So just for fun, I did an internet search for the benefits of singing. And as I showed Connor the presentation for this morning, he went, sheesh, dad, that's a lot of slides.

And I said, it's okay, we're going through them quickly. So a website called lifehack.org lists 11 good things, and Brock is already looking at me, he's probably gonna look it up right now.

[6 : 04] 11 good things or benefits that can come from singing. And here we are, we're gonna go through them. They are, number one, singing releases endorphins and oxytocin.

That's not oxycodone, which is a different kind of drug, which we're not talking about right now. Oxytocin is known as the cuddle hormone.

I thought that was cute. Because it's released when people snuggle with human contact. Oxytocin is known to decrease stress and anxiety. So hug it out, folks.

Both of these hormones can make you feel better in general and decrease any pain that you might be feeling. So obviously with my kidney stone right now, I need to hug more than average, I guess. Number two, singing improves your IQ. What does IQ mean? I had to look it up. I'm just kidding. Studies have found that singers and musicians typically have higher IQs than non-musicians.

[7 : 08] Because singing can apparently improve your overall brain function and help you think a little more clearly. When we go as Sunshine Fellowship to visit with folks that are there, Pat and I have talked about the impact that singing has.

Because these folks may be largely socially unable to engage due to dementia and other challenges. But boy, when you sing a familiar hymn, they are locked in.

They're right there. So there's clearly a connection there. Number three, singing leads to a longer life. Let's sing more songs right now. I want to live a longer life.

A joint Yale and Harvard study showed that, so this is, they must be singers because they're smart enough to be at Yale and Harvard, showed that for people living in New Haven, Connecticut, where they conducted the study, choral singing, singing in a choral group in a choir, increased life expectancy.

Interesting. Number three, or number four, sorry, singing lowers your blood pressure. Right?

Interesting. But that makes sense. Yes, oxytocin, you're more calm, you're more experiencing joy, experiencing that kind of natural singing high, I guess.

[8 : 28] Case studies have apparently shown singing can have a calming effect. I guess it depends on the style. If it's metal, maybe not so much. But I guess that depends on the ability of the singer.

Probably also the proximity of the listener. But sometimes it seems hospital patients, and I touched on this a little bit, in a slightly different way. They may see their blood pressure lower as they sing hymns with their visitors.

It's interesting, right? Number five. This is a really good one. Save money on Botox. Singing tones your facial muscles. It tones your diaphragm, and it tones your intercostal muscles.

And you're thinking, intercostal? Are those the muscles that hold islands together? No, not intercostal. Intercostal. The proper technique of singing from your diaphragm, which is the band of muscle under your lungs, can strengthen your abdomen and your back muscles.

If you see someone sing, their back is upright. You take a breath. When we learned in choir, you take a breath from your belly button, not from the shallow breaths that we tend to take during the day.

[9 : 40] You take it from deeper to support your breathing. You can exercise, you do exercise your facial muscles in unique ways when you sing.

That can make your face look more energetic and livelier, or pained perhaps too. And your intercostal muscles, if you don't know what they are, they're the muscles between your ribs that hold your ribcage together.

And so that group of muscles that runs there, they move the chest wall when you breathe. And they receive a positive workout when you sing. Number six, singing increases empathy and understanding between cultures, people have found.

Music can help us to feel connected to other people, even across cultural divides. Connor and I watched the Elvis movie last night, which I had seen and he had not seen yet.

And it was fascinating to me, again, to be reminded of all the different musical cultural influences that came together to make Elvis' style so unique.

[10 : 45] Singing songs that originate from other cultures can give us a new appreciation for those cultures, just as learning the language would. It can help us empathize with people from another culture.

Number seven, singing develops the lungs and gives you better posture, which I talked about a bit. When you sing, you naturally sit or stand straighter to get a better sound.

And singing also improves your lung capacity because you have to take a deep breath to sustain a note or continue on singing a phrase or a verse of a song.

It may help you breathe more easily as well as you develop those skills. We always got taught in choir to breathe alternately. So if we were singing in a group, you don't all stop to take a breath at the same time because there's a huge crash in the song, right?

So we would alternate our breathing and sustain as long as we could in between. Number nine, singing can help patients of, no, number eight. Whew, good thing for slides and a confidence monitor.

[11 : 50] I lacked confidence until I saw that. Singing brings people together and creates a sense of community. And I talked a bit about that this morning, right? Do you feel that when we sing together, we sing a familiar song of our faith, which we have sung together before, which brings us together in community because we all know it and we sing it together.

There's been, well, I'm back on number nine, singing in a choir or singing in any sort of group environment with other people can be a fun and bonding activity.

It gives you an opportunity to share an experience with a group of people. And there have been several studies that have shown that singing in a choir decreased depression in many adults.

It's interesting, right? The sense of singing and the sense of community fused together in that way.

Now, number nine, singing can help patients, apparently, of Parkinson's disease.

And there have been numerous studies that have shown how singing can increase the health of patients suffering from that disease. For these patients, singing can improve vocal and swallowing control, which, you know, I witnessed in my father-in-law, Michelle's dad.

[13 : 03] He had more and more challenges with swallowing and speaking and all of those things. And singing is apparently something that helps. There are even studies that suggest that music can help patients regain their balance.

So that's another really significant symptom of Parkinson's is that Jack Sparrow kind of tendency to be all over the place. It helps you anchor when you sing because, again, your core becomes critical as you sing.

Number 10, this is related somewhat to IQ, singing improves your memory. Even if you can't always remember all the words to a song, has anyone ever taught you, if you're singing in a group and people are looking at you, sing banana because 90% of the time, it fits.

So try it sometime. Not today, of course. But if you sing the word banana, banana in tune with, you're close enough. So I'll be looking for bananas in the congregation.

So that's the reality there is that even if you can't remember the words to a song, there's no question that it helps with your memory. If you're recalling words, even if they're a familiar song like we sang this morning, you're still accessing storage in there, right?

[14:17] You're pulling things out that are natural and familiar to you, but you still need to access the system. So that's one excellent way to keep your brain functioning well as you age.

Number 11, singing can boost your immunity. I think we all know how important an immune system is and to have it be strong and healthy. So that's the reality is the better we're breathing, the better we're, the more active we are, that helps your immune system.

So that's 11 things that we've looked at. So see, it's not that painful, not that many slides, right, Connor? So I think we can all recognize that singing seems to suit every season of our lives, can't it?

And if that list I just read is the world's rationale for singing, Psalm 96, which we're going to look at briefly this morning, gives us the Bible's rationale for singing.

So there's 13 verses, not a big one, Psalm 96, verses 1 to 13. So go ahead and open your Bible or your phone or grab a Bible from the pew in front of you and we'll look at this together.

[15:26] And I'm reading from the CSB translation because, again, I like the wording there. So this will be a very familiar psalm to you, quite likely, or parts of it will.

Sing a new song to the Lord. Let the whole earth sing to the Lord. Sing to the Lord, bless his name. Proclaim his salvation from day to day.

Declare his glory among the nations, his wondrous works among all people. For the Lord is great and highly praised. He is feared above all gods.

For all the gods of the people are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him. Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the people, some translations say nations. Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name.

[16:27] Bring an offering and enter his courts. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. Let the whole earth tremble before him. Say among the nations, the Lord reigns.

The world is firmly established. It cannot be shaken. He judges the people fairly. Verse 11. Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice.

Let the sea and all that fills it resound. Let the fields and everything in them celebrate. Then all the trees of the forest will shout for joy before the Lord for he is coming.

For he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his faithfulness. Amen to that.

Sing, sing, sing. It's our sermon title this morning and you may have noticed that those first couple of verses of Psalm 96 say, sing a new song to the Lord.

[17:31] Let the whole earth sing to the Lord and sing to the Lord bless his name. As I was preparing this week, it also struck me the repetition there.

And just a reminder that repetition in scripture reminds us and reminds us and reminds us, it emphasizes the things that we're supposed to pay attention to.

The things that are important. So in this case, at the opening of Psalm 96, sing, sing, sing. Psalm doesn't list an author and we've talked before that lots will identify who it was written by at the beginning.

But it's likely either David or Asaph. And you say, well, how do you make that assumption? Well, here's why. Because most of the words, almost all of the words of this psalm are also found in a psalm of thanksgiving, a song of thanksgiving that's sung by David and Asaph, see the connection, in 1 Chronicles 16.

So when the Ark of the Covenant is being brought to Jerusalem, David and Asaph wrote and sang a song that has very similar words. So there's the assumption, connection there.

[18:43] So this song was written to tell people this is what we do when we get together united in the Lord. we sing, which we did this morning, right?

So it's not just this is the chunk of the service that we plan, this includes these songs, and then we move on to this next chunk. Sure, that's part of it, that's part of service planning, but there's also method to that madness.

We begin singing praise to the Lord because that's what we're called to do. So if Lifehack, here comes more slides, if Lifehack gives us 11 reasons that we should sing in general, Psalm 96 gives us at least 12.

Connor's holding up hands. I know it's 12. 12, but I got the slide wrong before, so it's fair to assume I might mess up again. So the first reason it gives us, we should sing, verses 1 to 3 suggest,

because God asks us to sing me a new song, he says.

Everybody ought to sing to me, he says in verse 1. You ought to sing to let them know about the salvation that he offers. You ought to sing to declare all the great things that he has done.

[19 : 58] If God's simple and direct request of us is not enough, verse 4 gives us a second reason to sing. It says that we ought to sing, number 2, because God is great.

It says he is feared above all gods. And we ought to worship him because third, we should sing because God is real. And this is in the first part of verse 5.

All other gods are just idols, just like dead pieces of wood or clay or silver. They're carved, they're fake. They're not the real God. They can't know you, they can't help you, they can't respond to your prayers or change your circumstances, but our God can and he does.

So the indication here is that we should open our mouths and let our praises fly and sing a new song to the Lord. Number 4, we should sing because God made the heavens.

You'll see this in the second part of verse 5. Job 38, verse 7 also tells us that while creation was happening, the morning stars sang together and the angels shouted for joy.

[21 : 14] If the stars are singing, we should be able to manage it, right? The second half of verse 5 says, and you want another reason to sing? Just look up.

Look at the sky. Look at the heavens. I don't know if we'll see it. There's too much light pollution in the city, but I love looking at the stars. I will sit in a gravity lawn chair and just lay back and look at the sky.

So go out tonight and see if you can see the stars because God made each one of them and he knows them by name, scripture tells us.

Number 5, we should sing because why? God is beautiful. Beyond description we sing sometimes. First part of verse 6 says, His splendor and majesty are before him.

What does that mean? Well, it means that the being who created our being is so incredible that he has an aura that radiates all around him. Throughout scripture people are struck deaf, dumb, blind, fall on their faces in the presence of God because he is so beautiful and that's something we should sing about and we often do.

[22 : 26] Number 6, we should sing because God is out there somewhere? No. God is here. Second part of verse 6, God is in this sanctuary.

This place was built to inhabit him as so many other sanctuaries were. That doesn't mean he's trapped here. That doesn't mean he lives here. We come in in the morning and say, morning Lord. How was your night? Kind of lonely I guess. He's not here all the time. He is all the time but he's not solely here. Heavy theological stuff. But he's in this place and this place was built for him.

Number 7, we should sing because singing is a means of worship. Verses 7 to 9 touch on this. So when we sing in here, it's not like a pop song that you hear on the radio.

Shouldn't be anyway. We're not singing about lost love or cars or partying. We're singing about the greatness of our God. We're singing about what he has done for his people throughout history.

[23 : 34] For us in our lives. And we ought to sing to God because we love him. Number 8, we should sing because first part of verse 10, God reigns.

He is sovereign over all things. He is Lord, our Lord and Lord of all creation. He's made us. And as the saying goes, I heard somebody say once, God is large and in charge.

It's a little bit cheesy, but it gets the point across. God is big. God is powerful and mighty. And this God who is king, who created us, is also our judge.

Number 9, we should sing because God judges fairly. That's the second part of verse 10. There's a lot of talk about legal issues these days, right?

People who are guilty of things, people who are not guilty of things. It's sucking the oxygen out of important areas of our lives, I think. But God as our judge, he will never treat us unfairly because God never loses his cool.

[24 : 50] He never loses an eternal perspective that he has always and will always have. He never stops loving us. He never has an alternate agenda or ulterior motives like human judges can have.

He is trustworthy. He is reliable. He is predictable. He is consistent. He is all the things that most of us as human beings can never be, which should give us peace because we can count on him.

We can depend upon him because he will never change. We ought to sing to and about God because of all of these reasons, but even if none of them were valid, we ought to sing because we're part of creation.

And, number 10, all creation was made to sing. Verses 11 and 12, you can see this. And I love the words, the lyrics, because it's a song, remember, of verses 11 and 12.

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice. Let the sea and all that fills it resound. Let the fields and everything in them celebrate. Then all the trees of the forest will shout for joy.

[26 : 08] The heavens were made, friends, to sing to God. The sea was made to resound with his praise. You ever sat by the ocean?

We don't have an ocean close to us, but have you ever been to the ocean and just sat on the shore and looked at the ocean? It's breathtaking. The power of it or the serenity of it at times is breathtaking.

But the fields, the land, the trees, the plants, the animals, everything was made to celebrate and demonstrate and be on display the wonders of our God.

Heaven and sea and earth, all of creation, and we are part of creation. We were made to praise God and to celebrate him.

That's one of our primary reasons for existing. And if that's not enough, I'm giving you lots of reasons. Number eleven, we should sing because Jesus is coming again.

[27 : 11] Does that not give you hope? I mean, in the midst of day-to-day nonsense, we can get bogged down and forget, but he is coming again. The world isn't always going to be the way it is now.

Thank God for that. Thank God for that. One day the king will come again. His reign will be in our presence, which is again breathtaking.

He will rule with justice and with righteousness. righteousness. So I don't know about you, but my guess is that when Jesus first returns, I don't think I'll be able to sing right away.

We will be without words. We may gasp, using our lungs again in a different way. We may weep. We may overflow with a sense of his holiness.

I think we'll just fall on our knees in wonder and admiration. So, I think we should sing now personally. Because sometime in the future, at least for a while, we may not be able to pull it off.

[28 : 22] Our minds won't be able to maybe even form words. Our tongues may not even be able to pronounce the words. The words that we have now may not be enough. Because he will come in glory and we will see him as he is.

So not to be outdone by lifehack.com.org. Psalm 96 gives us one more reason. Verse 13 says that when he comes, he will judge the world with righteousness.

That means he'll judge rightly and fairly, as I said, like no earthly judge ever could. And the peoples with his faithfulness. Notice that it doesn't say there the people with his faithfulness.

it says peoples. And it says with fairness, with equity. Because even though when this was written, only the people of Israel worshipped the one true God.

The Bible sometimes looks ahead, shockingly. The writer of this psalm, whether David, Asaph, as we suggested before, seems to have clearly known that one day people from every nation, every tribe, every language, peoples, would worship the one true living God.

[29 : 44] We should sing because he will judge the world. Second part of verse 13. And as I said, he will judge with faithfulness. He'll judge based on, God will judge us based on our faith in his son.

Have you put your faith in his son? Well, duh, Pastor Kent, I wouldn't be here on Sunday morning when I could be golfing or sleeping. But friends, do you return to that faith and hope, even daily if necessary?

I often catch myself doing that, forgetting to return. When you begin to feel anxious, when you begin to feel despondent, when you begin to feel lonely or like the world is just out of control, return to God.

Have you expressed your trust in him as your only means of forgiveness? The world tells us, eh, what you did isn't that big a deal. Get over it, not a big deal.

It's ultimately what matters to you, not whether you hurt someone else or not, whether you've sinned or not. But if you put your recognition and your assurance in Jesus Christ as your only means of restoration of relationship with the Father.

[31 : 01] As I say these words, I think to myself, the church doesn't talk like this anymore. The church talks words of comfort. The church doesn't talk about conviction. The church doesn't talk about sin.

We don't talk about responsibility or a need for a redemption. The church doesn't talk this way anymore because society doesn't want to hear it. It's uncomfortable. When Jesus returns, he will judge us. Scripture is clear. But he will judge us faithfully, which means he'll judge us according to exactly what we've done. Scary, right? But comforting at the same time. There will be no assumptions. There will be a record. He'll judge us for the things that we've said to and about other people. The good things and the not so good things. The things that were true and the things that weren't true. He'll judge us for the things that we did that helped other people and for the things that we did that hurt other people.

[32 : 03] He'll judge us for the things that we did that were selfless, where we gave of ourselves for someone else, and for the things that we did that were selfish, that we're focused more on what we want in a situation rather than what might be best for someone else.

God is also going to judge us faithfully, which means he's either going to judge us based on our actions, which we just talked about, or he'll judge us according to our faith, according to the faith that we expressed in him to forgive our sins through Jesus, and in declaring and reconfirming our allegiance to God.

God's judgment, as I said, will be more fair and objective than any human judgment could ever be. So, whether you've known Jesus and sought to follow his will all your life, or if you've only just met him in the past few years.

Besides singing his praise, I want to just close this morning recognizing the importance of prayer. We pray to thank God, to praise him, to ask for help when we're struggling, but most importantly, we need to see his forgiveness for the sin that we have committed in our lives, because, friends, that sin pulls us away from a closer relationship with him.

in serving ourselves, we damage that relationship. So, this morning we're going to close by singing a prayer, or sorry, singing a prayer, I've got singing on my mind.

[33 : 37] We're going to pray a prayer of dedicating or even rededicating our lives to the Lord, and the words will appear on the screen. So, while your eyes may be open to read, you can still be in a prayerful posture in your heart, and make these words your own as you read them.

So, if you'd like to express and declare your faith in Jesus Christ today, pray these words out loud with me together. Lord Jesus, today, I invite you to be more than my Lord and Savior.

I admit I am a sinner in need of a Savior, and I invite you to be mine. Come into my life and live your life through me, and I will live for you for the rest of my life.

In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen. My brothers and sisters, praying a prayer of commitment and confession like that is a regular practice.

It should be a regular practice in our lives. And I promise you that it will bring a connection, a sense of reconnection between you and God. It will bring you peace and joy that will make your heart glad.

[34 : 53] And my hope is that gladness that comes to you will cause you to sing, sing, sing. Amen.