

# The Church that Sings

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Date: 11 March 2018

[ 0 : 0 0 ] When I first had the opportunity, which was the last time, the first and last time I had the opportunity to open God's Word with you and speak to you from God's Word.

Our topic was called to worship. And when Pastor Morris and I first discussed how that message would go, it really was designed to speak about corporate worship in the sense of congregational singing.

Well, things didn't quite go that way. As I prepared, I just had the sense that it was necessary to lay more basic or fundamental ground for worship.

And the sermon went in that direction. I didn't get too much of the corporate singing. But at that time, we found a biblical definition for worship.

It was taken from Romans 12 and 1. And that definition was our expression of devotion to God. It was an expression of devotion to God by presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice.

[1:10] That was our definition of we found of worship. Well, today I hope to get extensively to speaking about corporate worship through singing.

And as I prepared again, I got the sense that, you know, we normally begin by asking God to help us with the message.

So I thought I would do that as usual. But this time with all of your help, the help of the congregation to pray and ask God for help as we open His Word.

So would you please remain seated? So would you please remain seated? But I want you to help me in singing the song, lifting up a prayer to God and asking Him for His help. Let's speak, O Lord.

Speak, O Lord, and we come to you to receive the fruit of your holy word.

[ 2 : 17 ]    Take your truth, plant it deep in us. Shape and fashion us in your likeness.

That the light of Christ might be seen today in our acts of love.

And our deeds of faith. Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us all your purposes, for your glory.

Amen. Yes, Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes  
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Yes Yes Well, the verse we just sang is a sincere prayer that we often lift up to God as a  
congregation, but there's also a summary of why Paul wrote the book of Colossians to the  
church there.

Paul, along with Timothy, gives the church at Colossae this letter, and from the beginning, Paul makes his intention for the letter known to the church.

[ 4 : 13 ]     The epistle looks at the supremacy of Christ, but there's also another principal reason that Paul writes the epistle. And we see that reason in chapter 1 of Colossians, verses 9 and 10, so if you just turn there with me.

This is not the main text of the day, but I thought we should begin here to see the purpose. Colossians 1, 9 and 10.

And so from the day we heard, and that's the day that Paul and Timothy heard that the Colossians had received the word of Christ and believed on Christ.

So from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you. And here's the portion that I want to emphasize. Asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so as to walk in the manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing the knowledge of God.

So Paul plainly discloses to the Galatians that he's been praying for them. And his prayer is also one of the principal reasons for writing to the Colossians.

[ 5 : 41 ]     Paul wants two things. One, he wants them to have the knowledge of God's will. And two, he wants that knowledge to guide them in how they live empowered lives, bearing fruit in good works and even increasing in their knowledge of God.

So after giving thanks for the Colossians in chapter 1, Paul also in chapter 1 holds up the preeminence of Christ. And afterward, Paul briefly talks about his ministry at the end of chapter 1 and at the beginning of chapter 2.

But early in chapter 2, by the 6th verse, Paul begins to move in the direction of admonitions. He's putting forward some theological and some practical guidelines for the church to live by, to act on, so that they would walk in a manner pleasing to God.

So he gives instructions after instructions to the Colossians, and by extension to today's disciples, about how we ought to guard our hearts and live out our lives in order for us to give glory to God with our lives.

So when Paul gets to Colossians 3, verses 16 and 17, we see what is particularly helpful for us today as we look at these verses in the context of corporate worship.

[ 7 : 15 ]     So let's go to Colossians 3, verses 16 and 17. Colossians 3, verses 16 and 17.

And we're reading from the English down this way. 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 heart to God.

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.

As I prepared this, I kept thinking about two individuals in the Bahamas who are very well known to most of us. And I thought, you know, to mention them, I don't think that knowing what I know of them, they would mind just me briefly mentioning them.

One is the person that we often refer to as the singing bishop. And the other is a person who people have begun to call the singing priest. And while I don't have anything in particular to say about these men specifically and their delivery, their chosen style of communication, the titles that they go by are interesting to me because they sort of communicate that they have some special calling because they sing.

[ 8 : 55 ]     Well, this morning through this passage, I hope that we would see that we all have a calling to sing. In the gathering of God's people. And our singing communicates many things to those around us.

So in that sense, we are all singing priests. In particular, I hope that we will all see through this passage that the church is called to bring encouragement to each other, showing gratitude to God in corporate teaching and singing.

So as we will soon see, true worship always begins with God and it's always directed toward the one true God of the universe, the one person or being that deserves our worship.

So there's this vertical relationship going on while we gather in worship. It's us lifting up our praises to God.

And he is above us receiving those praises. But there's also a horizontal relationship that we should know about as well. And this is the relationship between every member of the congregation and their fellow worshipers.

[ 10 : 13 ] So there are several things that we can say about this horizontal relationship. But I would like to encapsulate them.

I believe that they will all be, or most of these things, could be encapsulated by the thought of encouragement. And so this morning, I'd like to offer five ways that we encourage each other in the congregation as we worship.

We encourage each other, one, through reminders of what we can see and hear, two, through a spiritual reminder, three, through obedience in teaching, four, through the proper use of spiritual songs, and five, through demonstrating love.

So first of all, corporate worship should be a source of encouragement to the gathering through what we can see and hear. The congregation gathered in worship, including worship and song, should be encouragement because it is a visual reminder.

Gathering together and then gathering in song gives us a visual reminder of our unity. It reminds us that we've all been called into one body and the one God and one faith by one Lord.

[ 11 : 45 ] And as we stand and as we sing together, we can look around the congregation and we could see this reminder.

In addition, we sing together with one voice giving an auditory reminder, something that we can hear. Although this concept is not explicitly stated in the text that we read this morning, it certainly is supported by it.

And it's supported in other passages as well. We can look at passages such as Nehemiah 8 and we see that the people gathered as one man, the Bible says, to hear the reading of the law.

And of course, in Acts chapter 2, we see unity in the fellowship of the saints who gathered day by day at the temple. Which brings us to our second point.

Our gathering is a source of encouragement through a spiritual reminder of the temple of God. We are reminded that the body of Christ is now the new temple.

[ 12 : 55 ] The corporate body is where God communicates, he communes with us. Which is another point of encouragement. Brought to us simply by gathering, simply by singing together.

We know that God is always with us. He never leaves us. And the truth is, we can experience God's presence even on our own. But the gathering of God's people is where we experience a greater manifestation of God's presence.

And throughout Scripture, we see how God has chosen to make his presence felt among his people. In Exodus 19, for example, we see God appearing at Mount Sinai.

And in Exodus 25, he commands Moses to build a tabernacle for him to dwell among the people. Later, he dwelled in the temple built by Solomon.

And then, in the person of Christ. Now, God's Spirit communes with us through the church as the body of Christ.

[ 14 : 05 ] So we are the new temple of God. And here's what Paul says in Ephesians 2, beginning at verse 19. I'll read it for you. So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

in him, you are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. So you see the language that he uses.

He uses this language that speaks of a structure being built. It speaks of a temple. And he says, we are the temple, a dwelling place for God's Spirit.

So we're the spiritual dwelling place and our gathering allows God's presence and power to be manifested and felt in a special way. We also can look at how we encourage through obedience and teaching.

So every individual brings something to the gathering. We bring our knowledge of God, we bring our understanding of Scripture and we bring our experiences that we have walked through with God.

[ 15 : 33 ] So when Colossians 3 and 16, it begins, let the word of Christ dwell richly in you. Paul is speaking about how we ought to be constantly interacting with Scripture, how we ought to be interacting with the Gospel.

And the word dwell implies that the word of Christ is actually living in us. the connotation is not the same as a temporary visit. It is the word of Christ living in us continuously.

So we must obediently be in God's word. We must constantly be spending time in it, even leading up to our gathering.

So we ought to be reading, internalizing, meditating on the word. It's a good idea actually to become familiar ahead of time with maybe a text that's going to be spoken on on a particular Sunday so that we could receive more.

We could position our hearts to receive more from the gathering. But in the worship service, we are not only able to receive, we are also able to give.

[ 16 : 54 ] We're not coming to the worship service empty. We are being filled as we spend time in God's word, as we meditate on it. And it's as though we are always internalizing that gospel, always internalizing Christ's eternal nature, his incarnation.

We are internalizing Christ living up to his ministry. We are internalizing his suffering on a cross for us, his death and his resurrection.

So that by the time that we come to the gathering, we are actually filled. And it's as if we are overflowing able to pour out to others something of what God has given us.

So when we are obedient and letting the word of Christ dwell in us, we do what we see in the next portion of the verse, which is teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.

This is one of the two ways that the text holds up to us as manifestations of the word of Christ dwelling richly in us. It talks about teaching and admonishing and then it talks about singing spiritual songs.

[ 18 : 10 ] And it's easy to get the impression that teaching and admonishing is something for church leadership to do. we can get the impression that, you know, the person who bring the message or the pastor or the worship leader should teach and admonish.

And it's not for the rest of the people, but that is actually not the case. And we know that because teaching and admonishing are things that we can all do.

And we see that the text is not directing this admonition to any particular set of people in the church. It's given to all the church.

And so these are instructions for all of us to do. And in fact, all of us have the ability to do it. We can teach and admonish simply by sharing.

we share what we have read in Scripture. We share what we sense the Lord is saying to us as we read Scripture.

[ 19 : 17 ] We can share what we sense the Lord is saying to us as we meditate. We can share our experiences that have taught us a life lesson. And the means of sharing is right here at the prophecy mic.

You know, to myself, I've never told anyone this before, but sometimes I call it the poverty mic because it feels as though I say to myself, the poor mic, no one ever gives it any attention. But really and truly, we should have a lot more visits to the prophecy mic.

Let's not have to call it the poverty mic. We can teach and admonish each other just by sharing.

It's not just for church leadership. It's for all of us. So we are called to teach and admonish in all wisdom. And we know that wisdom comes from God.

So again, supporting us back to the scripture. Spending time in the scripture, receiving God's wisdom. And Paul wrote, I'll read this one for you again, in 2 Timothy, all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

[ 20 : 30 ] And you never know what sharing a scripture can do. I know lots of times, at least I believe, lots of times, people have something that they want to share, but for whatever reason, they hold it back.

They don't do that. I recall a few years ago, our former worship team leader, Keith Bunting, he would regularly hold what we call singspirations.

And we would sing together, we would gather, and people would be encouraged to share the prophecy. I remember this one time, we were almost at the end of the gathering, we were wrapping things up, and my wife, Demetria, she came to share at the last moment.

And all of a sudden, we were no longer near the end of the gathering. It just really ignited or reignited a new worship service altogether.

And I remember her saying that she was so reluctant to share, but in the end, she felt that she just had to be obedient to God telling her to share this thing. So we never know what can come from sharing.

[ 21 : 43 ] And I can think of many other examples of this. People who have shared, who have opened up their lives, and how it has richly increased my faith.

and I believe others along with me. So the church that sings encourages each other also through the proper use of spiritual songs, teaching and preaching.

Now the second manifestation of the word of Christ dwelling in us richly that we have here in this text is singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

So with regard to singing and music and worship, I owe a great deal of what I'm sharing now to Bob Coughlin, who is the director of music and worship at Sovereign Grace Church.

And Bob has written two fantastic books that I highly recommend to you. One is Worship Matters, and the other is True Worshippers.

[ 22 : 49 ] And True Worshippers I know is actually available in the bookstore here. But you can get both of them, I'm sure, online, either the e-version or the hard copy.

But we just pointed out a moment ago that we teach each other through sharing at the Prophecy Mic. But one of the things that Bob points out is that, he points out in True Worshipers by the way, he points out that songs that we sing during the gathering are actually teaching us theology as well.

So, there's teaching going on in the singing itself. The church that sings uses spiritual songs to teach.

And Bob points out how various societies use songs to teach various things, even at the stage of early development. and there's a song that you could consider about how you learn the alphabet.

Chances are that most of us learn the alphabet, the English alphabet through a song. And I don't even need help with this one. I can sing this one alone. It goes A, B, C, D, E, F, G.

[ 24 : 03 ] And it even rhymes because the next line is H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P. Okay? So, it's a device rhyming it. It rhymes and it teaches us things that are core, things that we need to know for the English language, for writing, for reading.

It's a wonderful device. But, in the church, we do the same thing. I'll be ought to do the same thing, singing songs that are scripturally sound.

This will teach us theology. Consider a song like or My God.

You say that song. And it's uplifting. It's encouraging. It moves us. At the same time, it gets us familiar with the content, with the substance of Psalm 62.

And there are many other songs we can point to. I recall a song that is modeled after 1 John 4, verse 7, Beloved, let us love one another.

[ 26 : 13 ] And many, many children learned that Bible truth through that song. And even into our old age, we could probably quote that scripture because of a song that we learned.

And the same is true of many, many psalms that we sing. We are able to be encouraged. We are able to learn through the songs that we sing in our gathering.

And that's the church that sings also encourages not only the believers in the congregation, but it encourages the lost by preaching to the lost.

We do not encourage the lost in the same way that we encourage believers. But the unbelievers in our midst, they do get a testimony from us as well as we sing.

Our corporate worship encourages their hearts to what we believe. In Christ alone, my hope is found.

[ 27 : 16 ] He is my light, my strength, my song. This cornerstone, this solid ground, firm through the fastest drought and storm.

What heights of love, what depths of peace, When fears are still, when strivings cease, My comforter, my all in all, Here in the love of Christ I stand.

Believers singing that song are giving a testimony. To the unbeliever. And imagine what enters someone's heart if they don't have that kind of hope.

If they hear the believers sing of this hope of Christ, this solid ground, and they realize they just don't have it. Or their hope is something that is so shifty, so unreliable.

It is in fact a testimony to the lost. We are preaching to the lost. And Pastor Tim Keller says this, as quoted by, again, Bob Coffin in the book, Two Worshipers.

[ 28 : 42 ] Good corporate worship will naturally be evangelistic. Good corporate worship will naturally be evangelistic.

So in the light of the encouragement that our exhortations and our corporate singing brings to our own souls, to our fellow worshipers, and to unbelievers, we should be eager to sing.

But the truth is, we're not all eager to sing. Some people just don't like singing. Some people are embarrassed to sing.

Some people feel that their voices may not be as good as the other person's voice. And so they're not eager to sing. So someone in that position might ask, well, then why should I sing?

Why don't I just lay back, listen to the voices around me, and worship silently? Well, the most direct answer I can give to that is that we are commanded to sing.

[ 29 : 47 ] The Word of God in various places instructs us to sing. Colossians 3 and 16 is a command, really, instructing Christians to have the Word of Christ dwell in us richly through teaching, through admonishing, and through singing spiritual songs.

And Paul repeats this instruction in Ephesians 5, where he says, and do not be drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord, with your heart.

Almost the exact same verbiage. He says, be filled, and that is a command. And this is something that even goes back to Old Testament scriptures.

Throughout the psalms, we are exhorting to lift up our voices to God in song. And Psalm 149, for example, says, praise the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song.

His praise in the assembly of the godly. So, we're not only admonished to sing individually, we are told in Scripture that we should sing in the assembly of God's people.

[ 31 : 12 ] And that might be a joyful confirmation for some of us, those of us who love to sing. And for others, it might not be so welcome. It might be a dreaded thing that, you know, I have to sing.

I'm told to sing. Well, if you're in that position, I hope that this quote from True Worshipers will help you. Your voice, along with the, along with all other voices in your church, has been redeemed by the Savior.

As we sing, he presents our song to the Father for his glory and our joy. Or this quote from Harold Best, a human voice given over to Jesus and found in company with other voices given over similarly, produces a dignified and worthy song from storefront church to cathedral.

Singing is not an option for the Christian. No one is excused. Vocal skill is not a criterion.

In the New Testament scriptures, and I hope that encourages your heart, I hope that encourages your heart. In the New Testament scriptures, we're told that love for each other is what will give us this eagerness to share, this eagerness to sing.

[ 32 : 34 ] So, we can say that the church that sings also encourages each other through demonstrating love. So, if you're reluctant to sing, I encourage you to take in Hebrews 10 and 24 and verse 25.

You can actually turn there. Hebrews chapter 10 verses 24 and 25.

Hebrews 10. And it reads, And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day roaring there.

So, this guides us individually and corporately. Love should be what motivates us. We should be motivated to stir up each other to more love and to encouragement.

So, let us give our voices over to the Lord as we are commanded and let us make our praises to Him a pleasing aroma.

[ 33 : 55 ] So, finally, we can talk about the vertical relationship, this vertical relationship, this component of our corporate worship.

So, the church that sings experiences God's power and presence in this vertical relationship. instructive. It's instructive that Paul caps off his instructions on teaching and admonishing and singing by saying we should do this with thankfulness in our hearts to God.

It's instructive because it is the source of our love. We are thankful to God for what He has done for us. to the love that will cause us to teach and to admonish and to sing really is born out of that, of that gratitude to God.

It is, again, our reasonable response to God's kindness. So, when using that phrase, Paul begins to point us back to the gospel.

In verse 17, he again gives us the idea of worship with all our being and all our actions as a consequence of the gospel.

[ 35 : 19 ] He says, 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. He says, whatever we do, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus.

That's a gospel indication because no one goes directly to the Father, not on our own merit. The Father starts our relationship by drawing us, but it's because He sent Christ, because He sent Christ to be our substitute, the substitute for our sins, that we are able to draw close to Him.

Now we can stand on Christ's imputed righteousness to us. Think back to when God instructed Moses to build his tabernacle.

There was a separation between where God dwelled, what they called the Holy of Holies, from the rest of the congregation, from where the congregation was able to go.

Only the high priest was able to go into the Holy of Holies, and that was only once a year to make atonement the sins of the people. So the two places were separated by a veil, and this continued from the time of the tabernacle to the time of the temple during Christ's ministry.

[ 36 : 47 ] But this is what we are told in Matthew 27. I'll read it for you. Matthew 27 verse 51 says, at the time of Jesus' death, it says, and behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

And this is a very familiar passage, I'm sure, to probably all of us, or most of us. You've probably read this over and over. I have. And many times while reading it, I got the impression that this curtain, this veil, was torn because there was the shaking of the earth.

But that is not what we see in scripture. The order given of these events in scripture don't lead us to that conclusion. Scripture says that the curtain was torn in two.

And then it mentions after that that the earth shook and the rocks were split. And it gives the impression that this is an intentional work of God.

An intentional splitting of this curtain, this veil that separated us from his presence. It's a deliberate destruction of this thing that separated God's people from where he dwelled.

[ 38 : 18 ] It must have been intentional because our access to God from that moment, the way we access him, changed. it's not by accident that we can enjoy the type of relationship with God that we do today.

It was part of his plan. God was deliberately doing what he did, bringing us closer to him, closer to his presence so we can experience him. The writer of Hebrews explains in Hebrews 10, 19-22, Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain that is through his flesh.



And since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

God's name. So the writer of Hebrews compares the tearing of the veil in the temple to the literal tearing of Christ's flesh. He says it's through that tearing of Christ's flesh that we now can enter the holy places, even the holy of holies.

So we no longer have to be on the outside of where God dwells, relying on a priest. Instead, our priest, our high priest, is Christ himself, who has ushered us into God's presence.

[ 39 : 59 ] So we can experience God's presence in a special way because of Christ, because of what he has done. And again, this reminds us that the church is the new temple of God.

So with our gathering, with our collective lifting of hearts and song, we can experience God's presence among us. God is working in our praise, and he is at work in the praise of his people whenever we gather.

I'd like to invite the team to come back now. As they come, let's all consider how we are able to draw near to God and experience his presence when we sing.

And it is all through Christ. Christ is the reason we are able to experience God, his presence, in such a special way.

And I know that we can feel that even this morning as we sang, there was a sense of God dwelling among us. It is all because of Christ, what he has done. And that is a reason to turn our hearts to him.

[ 41 : 11 ] That is a reason to worship. That the word of Christ dwell new ritual, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your heart to God.

And whatever you do, in word or do, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, the Father. Amen.

I invite you to stand and let's sing of this love. Let's redeem his people.